2001
dreamwave
image
WARLANDS
THE AGE OF ICE
WARLANDS VOL 2
NEW SAGA BEGINS 300 YEARS LATER IN THE AGE OF ICE
ECHO INTERVIEW
THE MEN AND WOMEN BEHIND THE HOLOGRAMS
DREAMWAVE
PREVIEW MAGAZINE
EXCLUSIVE ART • INTERVIEWS
NEVER-BEFORE-SEEN SKETCHES
side A

DREAMWAVE

periodic table of elements

Pa[1] T LEE — penciller; creator; founder

Ro[2] GER LEE — editor-in-chief

Ad[3] RIAN TSANG — writer; creator

Al[4] AN WANG — colorist

Al[5] VIN LEE — inker; penciller

Am[6] ELIA LO — director of sales

An[7] GELO TSANG — colorist

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Ca[9] ROLINE MACARE — sales representative

Ch[10] ARLES PARK — colorist

Cl[11] IFTON ING — color assists

De[12] REK CHOO-WING — production manager

El[13] AINE TO — inker

Fa[14] E WONG — sales representative

Ja[15] MES RAIZ — background artist

Je[16] FF WOO — background artist

Je[17] N CHAN — colorist

Ke[18] N SIU-CHONG — writer; creator

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Lo[20] U KANG — penciller

Lo[21] NG VO — penciller; inker

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Mi[23] KEY LOPEZ — graphic designer

Ra[24] MIL SUNGA — inker

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Ro[26] BERT ARMSTRONG — inker

Sa[27] KA — colorist

Sh[28] ANE LAW — colorist

Si[29] GMUND TORRE — penciller

Si[Y-30] MON YEUNG — letterer

Ta[31] LENT PUN — graphic designer

Tr[32] ACY HO — inker

Yv[33] ONNE POON — colorist

welcome

Hello to all you Dreamwave fans who were lucky enough to snatch a copy of this rare preview book! This book is completely dedicated to you, the fans, and we hope that you enjoy the final product of all our hard work as much as we do. This book contains interviews with Dreamwave's hottest stars and **NEVER BEFORE SEEN ARTWORK**!!!!

We'll let you know what's in the near future for Dreamwave with previews of our future titles before it even hits your local comic book store! It also contains a great picture gallery of our **ENTIRE STAFF** so it makes it easy for you to grab autographs. So tell all of your friends to grab a copy before they sell out and get everyone's signatures while you still can! Until next time, read on and try to be patient with us because we're doing the best we can to get you the books you want in your hands.

All the best,

Derek Choo-wing
Production Manager
Dreamwave Productions

DREAMWAVE 2001 PREVIEW VOL. 1 JULY 2000, First Printing. Published by Image Comics 1440 N. Harbor Blvd. #305 Fullerton CA 92835 DARKMINDS, ECHO, SHIDIMA, WARLANDS is ™ and © 2000 Dreamwave Productions. All Rights reserved. Any similarities between names, characters, persons and/or institutions with those of the living or dead person or institution is unintentional and any such similarity is purely coincidental. With the exception of artwork used for review purposes, none of the contents of this publication may be printed without the permission of respective owners. *Printed in Canada*

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INTERNALS

WARLANDS 4a

ECHO 11a

SHIDIMA *1b

DARK MINDS *12b

created by
PaT Lee
art directors+designers
TaLent Pun & mikey Lopez
editor at large
Roger Lee
production manager
Derek CHoo-wiNg
director of sales
aMelia Lo
film output
Kell-o-Graphics
for Image Comics
JIM vALentino

DREAMWAVE CHECKLIST 16a

PAT LEE CHECKLIST 17a

*indicates flipside

warlands dark minds echo shidima warlands dark minds echo shidima warlands dark minds echo shidima

Synopsis interviews sketches

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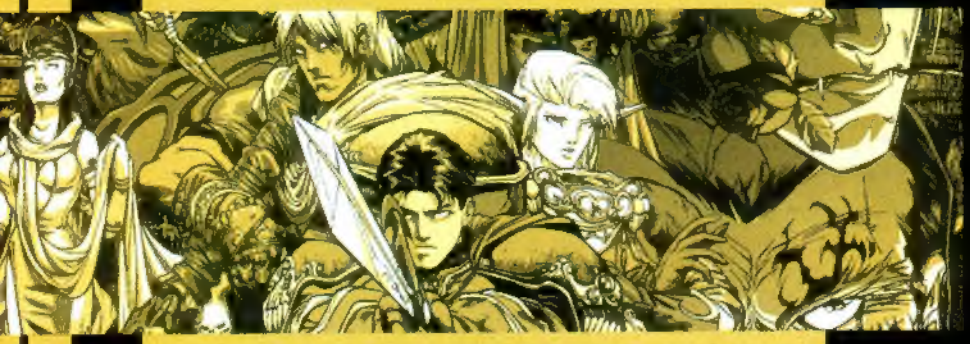
WARLANDS

synopsis

Welcome to Warlands, a gripping fantasy world of myth and of magic. Warlands is the realm within its assorted stories are told. The first story is titled 'Bloodrites,' and takes place about midway through the recorded history of the realm telling the tale of The Darklyte Crusade.

A bloody war centered around the acquisition of the Darklyte Armor, a mythical relic thousands of years old and fabled to bring about the destruction of the forces of darkness. Bent on total domination and weary of the legend of the armor, the evil Khan of Datara, the archvampire known as Malagen, hatches an intricate plan to cheat fate and bend the power of the armor to his own dark ends, with the aid of his son Aalok and a host of undead cohorts.



pat lee

adrian tsang

rob armstrong

angelo tsang

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sketches

PAT LEE

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WARLANDS

interview

Derek: Tell us a little about the book.

Rob (*Inker*): In typical Warlands style, everything you thought you knew about the WL world is tossed aside, and we start a story that is GUARANTEED to blow you away.

Pat (*Creator/Penciller*): I think we can give away a little more than that. Warlands Volume 2 takes place 300 years after the first volume. Eganko the ice dragon has caused the weather to change permanently after his fall into the ocean in Volume 1. 300 years has past and Zeph has halted his aging process in order to save Warlands from its doom! Sorry, that's all the info I can leak out.

Adrian (*Co-Creator/Writer*): Well, what it is, is an ecological disaster akin to the ice age, which was set in to motion during Vol. 1. Zeph, a powerful magician (whose roots you'll find in the pages of Vol. I) must find out a way to save the world as he knows it, or to decide whether it's worth saving at all.

D: Who are your favorite characters & why?

P: It's really hard to say. Personally, I think Zeph just because he has a lot of history behind him and he's more grown up. No one really knows how powerful he is, cause he never talks.

A: I don't want to give away too many of the characters that will be appearing in Volume 2. I would have to say that nearly all of the new characters appearing in 2 are an absolute joy to write. In Vol. 2 the characters are much more driven by their own desires rather than a collective goal as dealt with in Vol. I, so I can really get down deep and explore each character thoroughly.

R: I have to agree with Pat and say Zeph for sure. For such a small, diminutive character to become so powerful...add to that the fact that nobody saw him becoming the last hope of the Warlands world (even me), and he becomes infinitely more interesting.

D: How does the book change from Volume one?

R: The art style is definitely going to be more refined, and have more of a storybook quality to it. Story wise, NOBODY will know what's going to happen next...the first series introduced us to the world and its characters, and this series takes that and shake it up. Hard.

P: Well, in Volume 2, the land has now been fully frozen. The color palette will be colder in color, and the feel of it is a lot different. We will be changing the backgrounds into pure pencil crayon instead of the old fashion ink style, so that we can truly bring out the anime feel to it, making the foreground stand out more than the background. The inks will stay the same.

A: Warlands Volume 1 was set up to lay the groundwork for the entire Warlands Universe, as such, that burden doesn't lie as heavily on Volume 2, so in Volume 2 you're going to be seeing a lot more of Warland's geography, as well as much more intimate dealings with the characters themselves. Warlands Volume 2 takes the Warlands saga in a completely new direction both physically, and thematically.

D: Is it better? Why or why not?

P: I think we have improved a lot since the first couple of books of Warlands. Personally I like the first issue the most, just because we had more time so that we could make the book as good as we could get it. We are learning more and more each time as each issue goes by so I think that the third volume should be at least 20% better in quality and color than the first volume.

R: Definitely. Pat's grown as a penciller, Adrian as a writer, myself as an inker, and the rest of the crew as a whole by leaps and bounds since the first series started.

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D: Who can we expect to see and not to see?

R: I'm not allowed to say... it's a lot like working on a Star Wars movie.

A: Well, foremost, you're going to be seeing the grown-up version of Zeph from Vol. I, as well as some of the surviving Vampire Lords, and even some of the descendants of Vol. I's original characters...

P: I don't wanna hide TOO much so... 90% of the characters in Volume 1 will not be in the second volume. Mainly Zeph, Korzeth, Nasira and Tessan will still be alive. Character's grand children will appear in the book so that we can give readers an idea to what kind of background the characters come from. These characters will have similar physical features and also personality traits as their ancestors.

D: How do you feel about working on this book?

P: I feel absolutely excited to be working on Warlands. Usually a penciller will get bored after the first 5 issues from one title. I'm just really excited to work on the next volume, but also still excited for people to see the end of Warlands Volume #1.

A: I have to agree, working on Vol. 2 and Warlands in general has been an absolute blast, I'm really looking forward to bringing the Warlands Universe together, and truly creating a big 'ol world a-la 'middle-earth' or 'forgotten realms'.

R: I'm just loving the opportunity to work on Pat's pencils, and seeing how we can take the book to the next level.

D: How do you get along with other artists on the title?

P: Well, *Alvin Lee* will be penciling his own book, so I will be working with Rob Armstrong who is very flexible with his inking style. Rob is a great inker to work with and he is as open with ideas. Angelo... Well, Angelo has been working with me forever so of course it's great to have a colorist like him on board. Adrian has always been my writer because he's flexible with ideas and we work great together. Simon!!! You the bomb too!

R: Thanks for all the kind words Pat! I think everybody's committed to making the best book they can, and that pumps me up even more.

A: Overall, I think the Vol. 2 team gets along great. The entire Vol. 2 team has been at Dreamwave since even before there was a Dreamwave, so we've all been working together closely for several years. Sure, we have our disagreements here and there, but overall I think we just enjoy working with each other too much to let that get in the way of getting the books out.

D: Parting words?

A: Keep your eyes out for "Warlands: The Age of Ice" guys – it's gonna be a good one! Paintball Rules! NPPL here I come!

R: Forget everything you THOUGHT you knew about Warlands, and strap yourself in for the wildest ride of the last 4000 years!

P: Pick up this first issue! You will see a different kind of Warlands and I plan to pencil two issues before I solicit the first! More on time and hopefuly you will feel that the art has improved! See ya later!

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[SYNOPSIS]

December 24, 2055

The day the world quietly changed forever. Not a trumpet was sounded nor an anthem sung for the birth of one of science's greatest achievements

It began with a small covert group of scientists pursuing research in the unexplored field of tactile holography - holograms that have both volume and substance

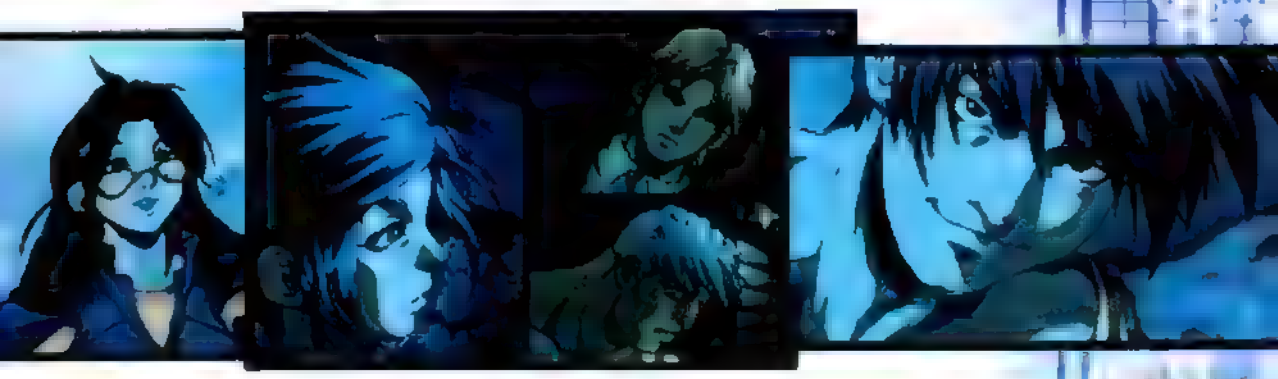
The original purpose of this research was a noble one - to create holographic replacement parts for amputees
This they achieved, but as their success grew, so did their ambition. Indistinguishable by sight or touch from its natural counterpart, they eventually created a tactile hologram of a complete human being .

An ***Echo***

Since that fateful day, twenty-six years have passed. After they had realized that the usefulness of Echoes extended far beyond the realm of their original medical application, the group disbanded and disappeared. Its members went underground using Echo technology to pursue their own greed and self-interests.

So the world turns unabated as everyone lives their lives blissfully unaware of the Echoes that dwell among them...

Everyone but a man named *Sho Yamato* and his team who have been charged with the duty of protecting a world from the unseen threat of which it does not know.

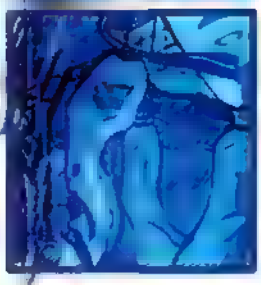


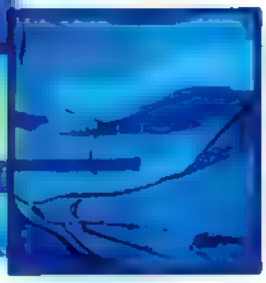
edited by
Pat Lee
Ken Siu-Chong

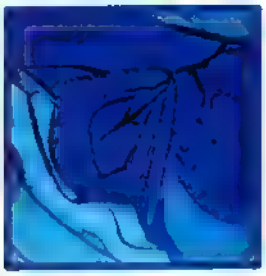
written by
Ken Siu-Chong

art by
Long Vo

colors by
Charles Park &
Kidkoum "SAKA" Visarutvanit







ECHO IV

Derek: How did you get into comics?

Long Vo: I got into comics when my friend first introduced me to X-Men; the Jim Lee era of course

Ken: Ah... the Jim Lee Era.

D: How old were you?

LV: I was a freshman in high school, so that would've made me about 15-16. Working wise, we went to SDCC and hooked up with Pat and he gave us the job.

D: Now, I know you do a lot more than just draw. What exactly do you do for the book?

LV: For ECHO, I do the layouts, pencil, ink . and I also do color and shade corrections, as well as effects.

D: LOL, what does that leave?

LV: Hehe, coloring the characters as well as background coloring and detailing. Believe me, the guys are always on the computer, those jobs alone are very tough.

D: Which brings us to Charles & Saka, how did you get into comics Saka?

Saka: I've been reading manga ever since I was a little kid back when I was in Thailand.

D: And where did you learn how to color?

S: Self-taught.

D: WOW!

S: And as for getting to work here, I was asked to join CP and Long.

D: How about you Charles?

Charles Park: Well I grew up in Korea so heavy influence from Japanese anime and manga ever since I was little kid.

D: And where did you learn how to draw?

CP: Basic stuff, of course art classes and all the digital art is self taught. After school, I got into online art as a hobby and gained some recognition and popularity and then I moved to CA, met with Long and Locke, and formed a studio after meeting with Pat at the SDCC (San Diego Comic Convention).

D: Ok, who are your influences Long?

LV: Ok, me again, influences . much like how I got into comics. Jim Lee's work greatly influenced me in the beginning. I started getting into anime and manga a couple years after that. From there, my influences are Nobuteru Yuuki(Record of Lodoss War character designer) and Satoshi Shiki(who works on Kamikaze). Also Hiroaki Samura (Blade of the Immortal), and who can forget Shirow.

D. How about you Saka?

S: I have so many artists that I like, I can't exactly tell who influenced my art cuz I really don't remember.

D: How about top 5?

S: Masakazu Katsura. Nobuteru Yuuki, Rumiko Takahashi, Mutsumi Inomata, and Kousuke Fujishima.

D: And you CP?

CP: Hehehe, for me, Kunihiko Tanaka. Nobuteru Yuuki, Hiroaki Samura, Masamune Shirow, and Satoshi Shiki. Pretty much the same, oh and Tetsuya Nomura from Squaresoft too.

S: Can I add Kousuke Fujishima to the list?

D: I guess now we can get onto the good stuff. Tell us a little about the book Ken.

LV: Well, it's pretty hard to summarize the whole book in a few sentences, there's quite a bit to it, but I guess the basic premise is "What if they could create tactile holograms?" and then it takes off from there. It brings in a lot of interesting possibilities that we delve into during the series.

D: Try not to give TOO much away but I would like to know a little more about the background.

K: Well the background of the story is that in the future, a group of scientists manage to create these physical holograms, and the book follows the exploits of Sho and his team who are sent in to handle the situation before it gets out of control. The effects Echoes could have on espionage, crime, etc would be enormous.

D: Phew! That was a mouthful. Who are your favorite Echo characters? We'll start with Long.

LV: My favorites so far are Gokon and Sho. I like Gokon cause he's the easiest to draw. As for Sho, he looks the coolest with the visor and I like designing new armament for him as we go

D: How about you Saka, who are your favorite characters?

S: Uh . . I draw only females most of the time so I'm gonna have to say. . either Nina or Yun.

D: What is it about them you like?

S: I draw Yun a lot actually, I think she's pretty energetic and pretty cool to have that in a girl

D: Hey CP, tell us who your favorite character is.

CP: Hmm... my favorite .. has to be Yun :) Can't go wrong with an energetic girl with short hair Hahaha

K: I have to agree so far... I think I've got a thing for girls that can kick ass. Also, as the story develops, I really like showing how, as tough as she tries to act, she can't seem to express her feelings towards Sho. It's something we can all relate to. But I can't say I really have a favorite character, I love them all! Wait till you all see Sho and Chang's sub plots

D: So what can we look forward to in upcoming issues?

CP: Improving arts.

LV: More action, more effects, typical movie sequel stuff

K: Well, story-wise, it will soon be revealed that there's a much larger Echo problem than was first thought. . but you'll have to wait to see what the big secret is. Big X-Files Conspiracy-like stuff

D: Oooooooooooooooooooooohhhhh, Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhh

D: How do you feel about working on this book?

CP: We try to top previous issues every time. So hopefully we can continue to improve upon each issue

LV: I'm really excited to be able to work on a book like this. I'm really into action and effects, so I think this is a perfect outlet to showcase those things I love to do

K: You're pretty good at those subtle, moody scenes too!

D: Saka?

S: For me, I'm exited and kinda nervous.

D: Nervous why?

S: This is my first professional work and I don't know what people will think of my work

CP: This project is a great footstep for us and we are very grateful for such an opportunity

K: It's been great working with such talented artists as Long, Saka and Charles. As a writer, you always hope that the artists can pull off what you try to envision in the script, and they never cease to amaze and surprise me! It's great seeing them bring my stones to life on the page! Thanks guys!

D: Ok kids... now for what we all want to know... how do you all get along with each other?

CP: Hehehe, Well for one, we live together, so we better get along, hahaha

D: So I'm assuming you all get along pretty well?

LV: Yeah, we're all easygoing types and Ken is very open to suggestions. I'm really glad that we're able to get some creative input in as well

D: Agreed?

K: Yeah, I try to keep the artists involved

D: Alrighty then, that just about wraps things up... any parting words?

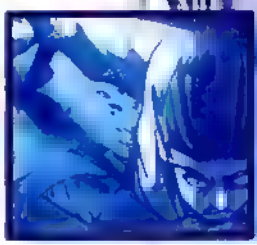
CP: Echo, echo, echo, echo, echo, echo, echo.

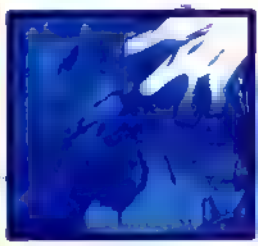
S: "piyo piyo"

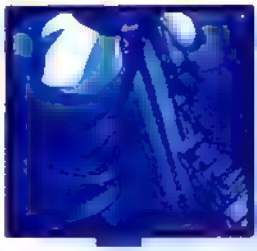
LV: Um. yeah!

K: I just hope all the fans are liking Echo so far! Hope to see you all at this year's Conventions!

D: Ok, thanks a lot guys, keep up the amazing work!







[SKETCHES]

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checklist

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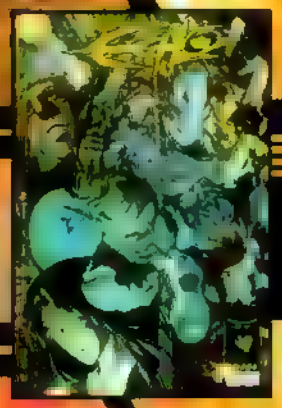

DARKMINDS Volume 1
Pencils by Pat Lee
Written by Adrian Tsang

Chapter 1:	Regular	O
	Variant (Pat Lee) Cover	O
	Dynamic Forces Gold Foil	O
	Dynamic Forces Chrome	O
	Another Universe Edition	O
Chapter 2:	Regular	O
	Variant Cover (Pat Lee)	O
Chapter 3:	Regular	O
	Variant Cover (Pat Lee)	O
Chapter 4:	East Coast Cover	O
	West Coast Cover	O
Chapter 5:	Regular	O
Chapter 6:	Regular	O
Chapter 7:	Regular	O
Chapter 8:	Regular	O
Chapter ½:	Regular	O
Written by Ken Siu-Chong		
Chapter 0	AU Regular	O
	AU Gold Storm Edition	O
Written by Ken Siu-Chong		
Dark Minds Collection (Chapters 1 to 3)		O
Dark Minds Trade Paperback		O

DARKMINDS Volume 2
Pencils by Omar Dogan
Written by Ken Siu-Chong

Chapter 1:	Regular	O
	Variant (Pat Lee) Cover	O
	Variant (Joe Quesada) Cover	O
	Dynamic Forces Gold Foil	O
	DW Exclusive	O
Chapter 2:	Regular	O
	Variant (Pat Lee) Cover	O
	Variant (Michael Turner) Cover	O
Chapter 3:	Regular	O
	Variant (Pat Lee) Cover	O
	Variant (Joe Madureira) Cover	O
Chapter 4:	Regular	O
Chapter 5:	Regular	O

NEON CYBER Volume 1
Pencils by Lou Kang
Written by Adrian Tsang

Chapter 1:	Regular	O
	Variant (Pat Lee) Cover	O
	Dynamic Forces Variant Cover	O
	DW Glow Edition	O
Chapter 2:	Regular	O
	Variant (Pat Lee) Cover	O
Chapter 3:	Regular	O
Chapter 4:	Regular	O
Chapter 5:	Regular	O
Chapter 6:	Regular	O
Chapter 7:	Regular	O
Pencilled by Sigmund Torre		
Chapter 8:	Regular	O
Pencilled by Sigmund Torre		

WARLANDS Volume 1
Pencilled by Pat Lee
Written by Adrian Tsang

Chapter 1:	Regular	O
	DUO Cover 1	O
	DUO Cover 2	O
	DUO Cover 3	O
	Armor Chrome Edition	O
	Dynamic Forces Variant Cover	O
	Dynamic Forces Canadian Edition	O
	European Edition	O
Chapter 2:	Regular	O
	Variant (Pat Lee) Cover	O
	European Edition	O
Chapter 3:	Regular	O
	Variant (Pat Lee) Cover	O
Chapter 4:	Regular	O
Chapter 5:	Regular	O
Chapter 6:	Regular	O
	DF Gold Foil (Nasira) Cover	O
Chapter 7:	Regular	O
Warlands Chronicles 1		O
Warlands Preview		O
AU Chapter 0:	Regular	O
	Variant (Pat Lee) Cover	O
Wizard ½:	Regular	O
	Variant (Pat Lee) Cover	O

ECHO Volume 1
Pencilled by Long Vo
Written by Ken Siu-Chong

Chapter 1:	Regular	O
	Variant (Pat Lee) Cover	O
	Holochrome Edition	O
	DW Exclusive	O
Chapter 2:	Regular	O
	Variant (Pat Lee) Cover	O
	DW Exclusive	O
Chapter 3:	Regular	O
	Variant (Pat Lee) Cover	O

SPECIAL

Dreamwave Preview 2000/2001	O

Dark Minds/WitchBlade
Dreamwave/Top Cow
Pencilled by Pat Lee
Written by David Wohl

Regular	O
Variant (Marc Silvestri) Cover	O

ORDER ONLINE

The PAT LEE BOOKS has been arranged in chronological order, beginning with his earliest work.

1994

[illegible]
Culture Comics
- Issue 1 O

PROPHET
Extreme
- [illegible] O

[illegible]
Maximum Press
- Issue 0 (5 page insert) O

[illegible]
Maximum Press
- Issue 1 O

EXTREME SACRIFICE
Maximum Press
- Issue 1 O

BLOODPOOL
Extreme
- Issue 1 (mini-series) O
- Issue 2 (mini-series) O
- Issue 3 (mini-series) O
- Issue 4 (mini-series) O
- Trade Paperback O

CELESTINE
Maximum Press
- Issue 1 O
- Issue 2 O

GLORY/CELESTINE
Maximum Press
- Issue 1 O
- Issue 2 O
- Issue 3 O

AVENGEBLADE
Maximum Press
- Issue 1 O
- Issue 2 O

WYNONNA EARP
WildStorm
- Issue 4 O
- Issue 5 O

[illegible]
WildStorm
- Issue 4 O

WILDCATS
WildStorm
- [illegible] O

WETWORKS
WildStorm
- Issue 29 O
- [illegible] O
- Issue 31 O
- [illegible] O

WOLVERINE/PUNISHER: REVELATION
Marvel Knights
- Issue 1 O
- Issue 1 (Dynamic Forces variant cover) O
- [illegible] O
- Issue 3 O
- Issue 4 O
- Trade Paperback O

1999

PAT LEE VARIANT COVERS

GEAR STATION
Gear 23
- Issue 1 O

SOUL SAGA
Top Cow
- Issue 2 O

DIETY REVELATIONS
Hyperworks
- Issue 1 O

LADY PENDRAGON
- Issue 1 O

LADY DEATH/PURGATORI
Chaos Comics
- Issue 1 O

[illegible]
Page Slayer Studios
- Issue 1 O

AVENGLYNE
- Issue 1 O

RE-GEX
- [illegible] O

dreamwave 2001
Shidima
SHIDIMA PREVIEW
FIRST EVER PUBLISHED PAGES
OF THE HIGHLY ANTICIPATED
WARLANDS SPINOFF
DARKER MINDS
NEW CREATIVE TEAM
NEW FOCUS
DREAMWAVE
PREVIEW MAGAZINE
EXCLUSIVE ART • INTERVIEWS
NEVER BEFORE SEEN SKETCHES
side B

image
DREAM
DW
WAVE
WARLANDS
Banished Knights
Coming 2001
ALVIN LEE
R. SUNGA

Shidima

A WARLANDS SAGA

Hundreds of Years before The Darklyte Crusade, before the First War of the Races, when faerie folk still roamed the world, and the threat of the Dataran Horde was little more than a fairy tale, the people of the Eastern Kingdoms lived simple lives. They lived lives without war, and largely without suffering

But far across the azure expanse of the Great Western Ocean an altogether different civilization thrived. It was an empire that reached its peak nearly a century before the first humans emerged from the safety of their caves.

It was an empire of both great evil and great honor. It was an empire ruled by swordsmanship and magik of a kind never before and never again to be seen in the world of Warlands. It was an empire called Shidima , and this is its legacy

2000

CREATED BY PAT LEE AND ADRIAN TSANG

ART BY ARNAKIN

WRITTEN BY ADRIAN TSANG

INKS BY RAMIL SUNGA

COLORS BY SHANE LAW

BACKGROUNDS BY JEFF WOO

LETTERING BY SIMON YEUNG

18

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YOU, COME FORWARD. YOU SAY THE EMPEROR IS RICH, AND THAT YOU'VE NOT ENOUGH TO FEED YOURSELVES
LET US FIND OUT
YOUR BELLY LOOKS FULL ENOUGH TO ME BOY
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Shidima

I went to Chicago Con '99 and met them (The Dreamwave Crew) there

Purely out of luck. I knew someone who knew someone... yada, yada, yada... here I am.

Well, I suppose I should start from the beginning. For as long as I remember, I've loved to draw. It started with Dragon Ball Z, my favorite anime as a kid. That's where most of my influence comes from. When I got into high school, I started to get into American comics. I was a big fan of Joe Mad and instantly tried to draw like him. When I was 16, I was working on a school project which was a comic book. I ended up going to a Toronto Con that year and showing some of it and other sketches to Pat. I met Pat through Adrian and Angelo, who are family friends of mine and who I also knew from school. My friend and I got positions at Dreamwave after that con, and I've been working there since.

I'm influenced by many different people and things -- artistically however, I'd say Hiroaki Samura, Bengus, Bob Masse, Doug Chiang, Locke, and the DW crew.

Bengus illustrator of Capcom

You guys aren't saying much!!! Anyway, as I mentioned, from the very beginning I've been a fan of Akira Toriyama (DragonBall). In American comics, I love Joe Mad's stuff and basically all of Cliffhanger, when it comes out that is. What made me gear myself more to the Japanese style though was Capcom's character art, by Bengus, Kinu, Akiman, and others. Recently, I've been a big fan of the guys doing Echo. I love Saka's work on Painter, I'm a big fan of Locke's black and white funky, gritty style, and Long Vo and Charles Park are also great. My favorite comic today is Blade of the Immortal. Hiroaki Samura is easily my favorite artist. From storytelling to characters to simply the style he draws in, I think it's all amazing.

Every panel seems like an animation cell

Shidima is a book set in a place much like Japan, back in Samurai and ninja days. The story is about a man who is caught in between an evil empire ruling Shidima, and a rebellion that has risen to stop it. I'm still not clear on the details of the story, but I know that Adrian will hook it up bigtime!

Anything for you Arnakin!!! In more detail, Shidima takes place in a distant part of Warlands, in a society patterned after various parts of cultures from all over the far east as well as a generous sprinkling of Warlands' own mythology, technology, and science. The main character in Shidima is a former thief/assassin type character exiled from his homeland (Myridorn, within which much of Warlands Vol. 1 takes place). The story centers around him, and both his outward and personal struggle against the tyrannical rule of an evil emperor bent on the subjugation of the entire nation. Trapped in a world where he himself is an outsider, our hero must deal with both the physical and moral implications of fighting someone else's war.

Uhh ... Adrian?

As of yet, there is not a direct tie-in to Warlands that is apparent in Shidima, however, our hero will have to go home sometime won't he? And when he does, he may find that the world is a much-changed place from when he left it.

There is Fire and Ice. My favorite is Ice.

Well I like the main character, Aldaran, of course and I like to draw him cutting things up like in the Shidima flip book story coming in Warlands #10! But my favorite character so far has to be Hakara, the Prince of Ice. He's just so badass!

Hahaha, it's hard to say because Shidima's storyline centers around the fearsome fighting abilities of it's 'warrior caste', so you're going to see some people on both sides of the fence that can do some pretty incredible things. At first glance you'll probably realize that many of the characters have got a sort of 'samurai-esque' feel to them, which was the kind of thing we were going for

I think one of my favorite characters would be Hakara, who is one of the primary antagonists in the book. He's cool because unlike most of the other villains I've written before, he's somewhat of a wild card. If you have to slice it one way he's evil, but he pretty much doesn't have any other agenda in mind other than serving his own desires, and advancing his fighting abilities. Someone with that kind of mentality is really fun to write, because you never know what he'll do next.

I'm very happy with the way it looks so far and also with the people I get to work with on this. I think we mesh well together and we have a very open line of communication with our ideas and criticism. Arnie, being the youngest of the team, has so much energy and it really shows in his work. This really makes everybody enthusiastic about working on it, which in the end makes the whole experience seem less like 'work'.

Thanks for all the kind words Jeff! Originally I was actually really insecure about my own talent as a penciller and was doubtful about my ability to handle a monthly book. However, later on Pat was able to convince me that it was a good opportunity to get my name out there and to get some experience on just how it feels to work full time. I think it's going to be a good learning experience for me.

For me, working on Shidima has been great, I'm ultra-happy with the way the story is turning out, and would say that it's definitely a culmination of all of the things that I've been learning steadily about writing since I started on Dark Minds.

I feel lucky to get the chance to work with such talented people

I hate... ouch!... I mean I love working with everyone

Good.

Armakin ..... he is coming

'Oh Arnie, you're my hero!'

Pho is the best food in the world. Eat Pho and you're cool.... don't and you might as well kill yourself

makin

sketch book

8B

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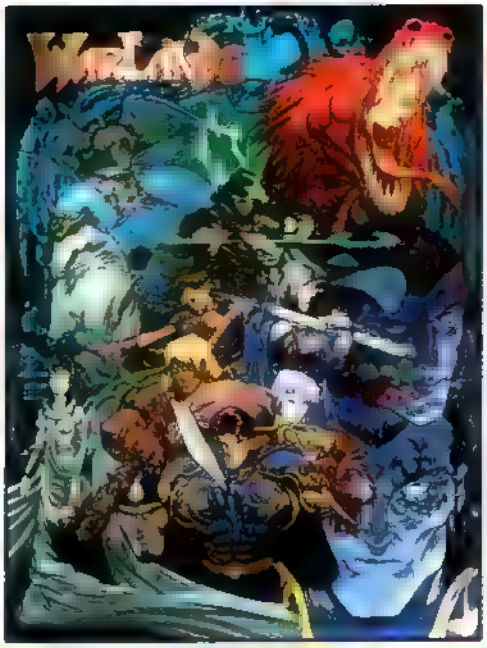

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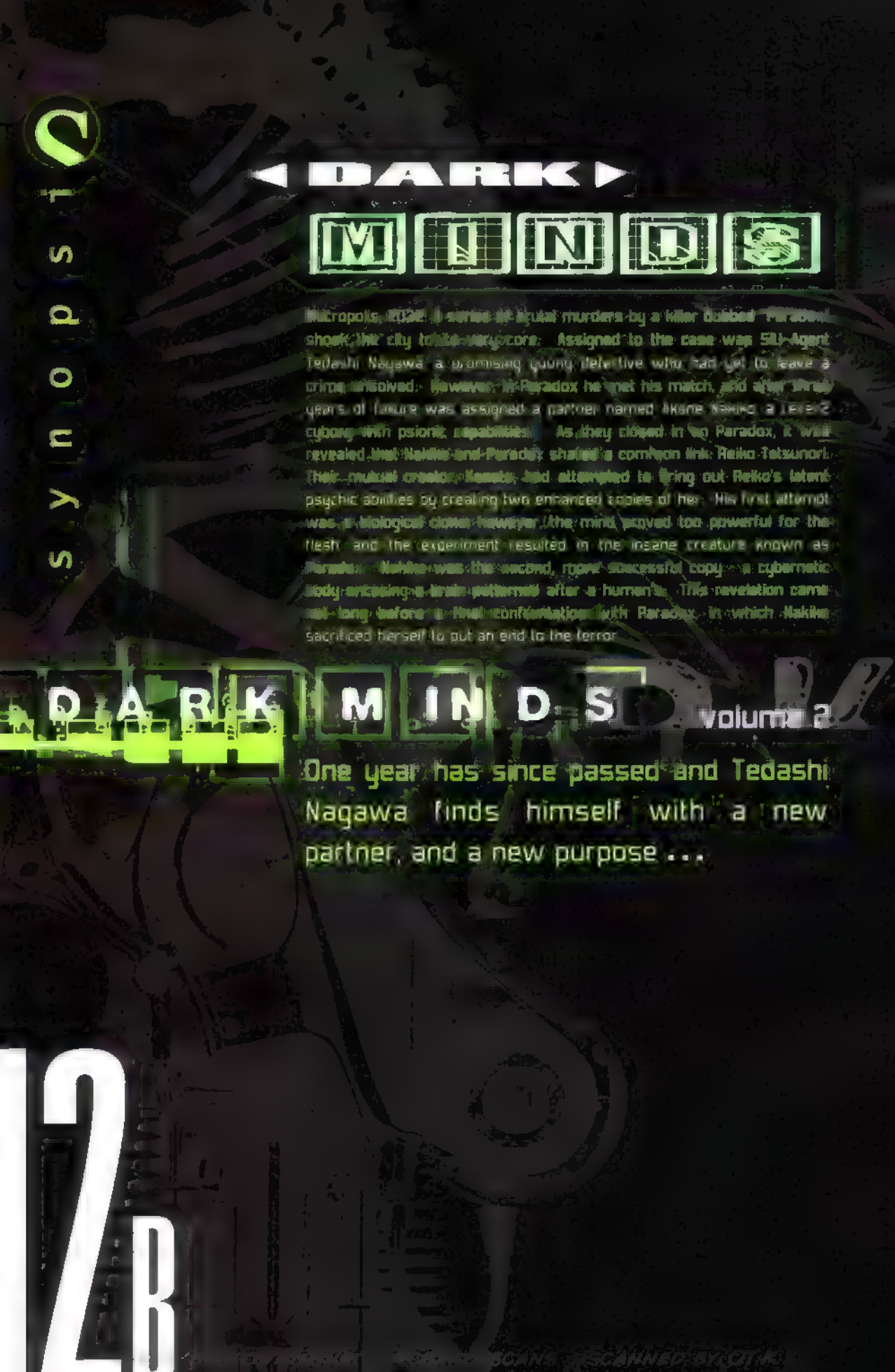
synopsis
DARK
MINDS
Metropolis 2042: A series of brutal murders by a killer dubbed "Paradox" shook the city to its very core. Assigned to the case was SIU-Agent Tedashi Nagawa, a promising young detective who had yet to leave a crime unsolved. However, in Paradox he met his match, and after three years of failure was assigned a partner named Akane Nakiko, a Level 2 cyborg with psionic capabilities. As they closed in on Paradox, it was revealed that Nakiko and Paradox shared a common link: Reiko Tatsunori. Their mutual creator, Kenshi, had attempted to bring out Reiko's latent psychic abilities by creating two encoded copies of her. His first attempt was a biological clone; however, the mind proved too powerful for the flesh and the experiment resulted in the insane creature known as Paradox. Nakiko was the second, more successful copy - a cybernetic body encasing a brain patterned after a human's. This revelation came not long before a final confrontation with Paradox, in which Nakiko sacrificed herself to put an end to the terror.
DARK MINDS volume 2
One year has since passed and Tedashi Nagawa finds himself with a new partner, and a new purpose...
12
B

13

the darkminds new creative team

MINDS

12b/13b

pat lee
creator

ken siu chong
writer

sigmund torre
pencils

james raiz
backgrounds

rob armstrong
inks

shane law
colors

simon yeung
letters

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interview

Derek: Tell us a little about the book.

Ken (Writer): The first thing I wanted to do was give it a totally different feel. I'm sure the readers noted that it's a little lighter and I wanted to give it a "cop drama" sort of feel. It's more along the lines of "Lethal Weapon," especially with the introduction of Mai. Her & Nagawa have a much more personal side. Plot wise, I can't give too much away but you're eventually going to see what happened to Nekiko because it was left pretty open-ended at the end of Vol. 1. You will see the significance of everything in Vol. 1 by the end of Vol. 2.

D: Who are your favorite characters & why?

Pat (Creator): I like Nagawa a lot cause he's a serious guy but also crack a joke every now and then, and he's really good at what he does.

Rob (Inker): Nekiko ... she has a genuine sex appeal not found in contemporary books ... she's not running around in a leather bra and studded shorts ... but she's still a sexy character.

James (Background Pencils): I have to say Mai. She's got that personality where you actually want to be her friend.

Sigmund (Penciller): Well, I like both of Darkminds' main characters. I like Nagawa because he's fun to draw and his design is pretty unique. Mai is really cool 'cause she's such a flooked out character and can hold some sex too.

DARK MINDS

D: How does the book change from Volume 1?

P: The writing is somewhat different. The first 5 books were different because of the pencils and colors.

K: Well, from the writing point of view, I just want to make sure it's unique. I want to create something [illegible] before and I'm pretty sure I've accomplished that.

D: Is it better, why or why not?

P: I think that now that we've changed the color scheme back to the first volume of Darkminds, I think [illegible] book will feel more darkness in the feel of the book. Just like what people wanted from the beginning.

R: Yes, because everybody who is involved has grown artistically and storytelling from all parties [illegible]. And with the addition of me, of course...

Everyone laughs.

D: Who can we expect to see and not to see?

P: Well, I think a lot of people are urging to have Nekiko in this volume. Uhhhm... Can't say no more!

J: That's Up to Ken, and that's Top Secret ...

K: Hahaha, I just hope everyone liked the zero issue because I really had fun with Mai's origin. She's my [illegible] Darkminds universe so I tried to make sure she was really deep and show exactly WHO she is. Also, coming up in issue 5, she has to rescue her uncle and it's a lot like a Hong Kong action movie.

D: Why was there such a drastic change in artwork half way through the series?

J: Well, the response we've received from the readers is that with the first few issues of Vol. 2, although it was well done, did not grasp the feel of Vol. 1. With the new team, it not only recaptures [illegible] of the first volume, it tops it.

R: Being a member of both teams, I think it was due mainly to creative differences between what the artist saw as the best direction to take the book and what we saw as the best route. The book needed a darker, grittier vision, and the former artist wanted to accentuate the lighter side of Macropolis.

S: The change occurred because fans made it clear that the feel of the book had changed a lot from the first volume. It was a lot lighter and more cartoony. When fans think of "Darkminds", they expect a dark, gritty, [illegible] noir feel. That is the style I intend to use for this project and with James' mind-boggling backgrounds, the fans will not be disappointed.

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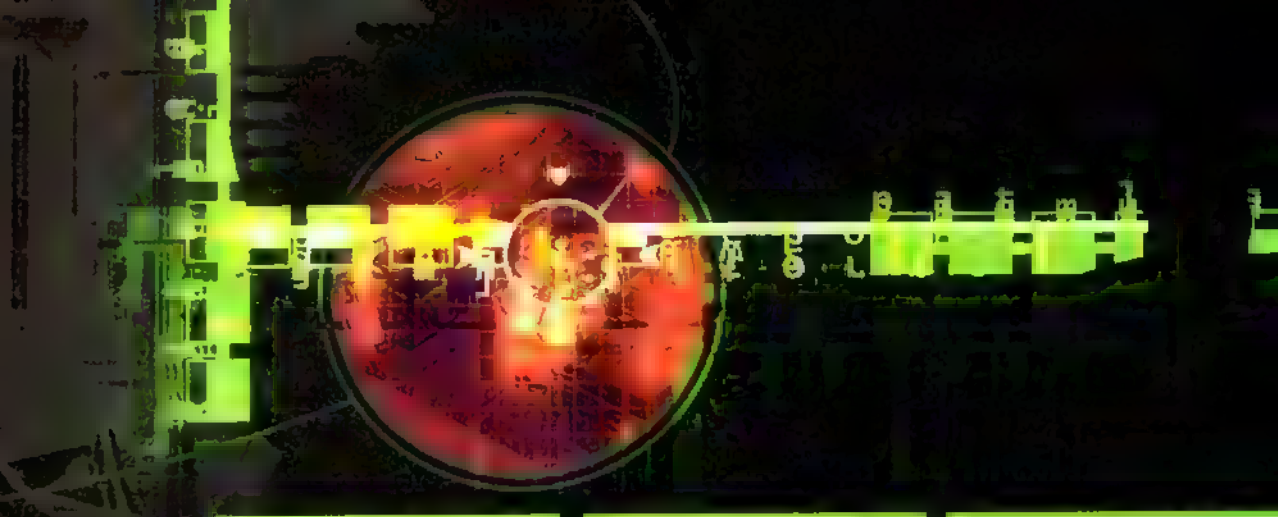

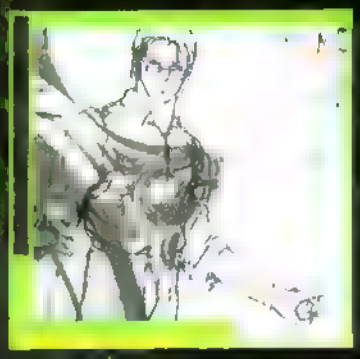

WIND 15B

D: Can we expect to see a Volume 3?

J: Only if the readers ask for it!

R: I would expect so...the series is still popular, and I'm sure Ken has a great idea to blow out the series in an epic Trilogy-style.

P: Definitely! We have found this wonderful Taiwanese artist named Christina. If you wanted Darkminds to be like how it was like in volume 1, you have to check out her art on Darkminds Volume '3 in 2001! Keep an eye out for this hot upcoming artist!

D: How do you feel about working on this book?

P: I've always loved Darkminds for the feel of the book and I'm really excited to see the last 5 chapters of Volume '2 when Sigmund Torre takes over.

J: It's a great experience. To tell the truth, it doesn't feel like work. I'd be doing this sort of thing anyway, even if I didn't have this job. I still can't believe I actually get paid to do this.

R: I love it. It's a true learning experience, and it's refreshing to be in an environment where I respect and admire EVERYONE I work with.

S: I feel really lucky to be given this opportunity and incredibly excited to get started.

D: How do you get along with each other?

P: The Darkminds Team for the last 5 chapters of Darkminds Volume '2 are very excited to work on it. I can't wait to see these guys start.

J: What makes Dreamwave a great working environment is that we're all friends. Especially with this new Darkminds team, all of us aren't afraid of putting our two cents in. If I think Pat or Sig drew something wrong, I'll tell them, and if they find perspective problems or whatever in my work, they'll tell me. No one has a big ego, or think they're the best thing since Michelangelo. That's very important. All of us are more concerned about the final product, to make sure when the reader picks it up, it's the best damn thing they've ever read.

R: Heh, heh, heh ...

S: Ken and I have known each other since grade nine and we've been into the comic thing for a really long time now...I can't wait to work with him again since we used to collaborate years ago doing small projects and samples ... It'll be a homecoming of sorts. As for the rest of the crew, I'm really looking forward to working with James cause his stuff is just incredible. And Rob did a few pages of my Neon Cyber work and I find that he knows how to compliment my style perfectly.

D: Parting words?

R: Parting words?--How about...separate, alleviate, diverse...he!

S: This is a dream come true and I will do my very best to please the fans and make Darkminds Vol. 2 a classic.

P: Again! Look out for Christina for Darkminds chapter '3! You wanted Darkminds to be dark? Well Christina will soon show you how Dark she can get with Darkminds! Peace!

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IMAGE COMICS PRESENTS

WARLANDS™

THE AGE OF ICE

Created by Pat Lee and Adrian Tsang

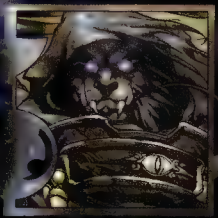
Pencils **Pat Lee**
Plot
Separations
Story and Plot **Adrian Tsang**
Background Assists **James Raiz**
Inks **Rob Armstrong**
Flats **Erik Sander**
Letters **Simon Yeung**

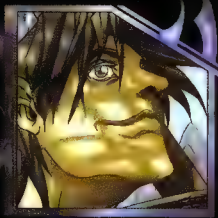
Editor **Roger Lee**
Production Manager **Derek Choo-Wing**
Director of Sales **Amelia Lo**
Graphic Design **Talent Pun**
Film Output **Kell-O-Graphics**

"When I was a boy, I saw men fight and die for their freedom against Melagen and the Dataran Horde. The victory was hard earned, the cost was high. Years later when men could no longer remember the horror of those days, songs of great deeds and battles would be sung. Many sang of the great Ice Dragon Eganko, felled atop a mountain and sent to a watery grave in the ocean below. Even through death, the dragon exacts revenge on us for disturbing her slumber; its blood slowly freezing my world. I could mark no spring or summer this year, the seasons have stopped changing. It won't be long now. For me, or the world.

I've increased the natural course of my life well beyond that of any man, and paid a terrible price in exchange. I was ready to rest. Now a woman from my past returns to tell me I must continue the fight, she would have me save the world. And in the darkness, when I am alone, I dare to ask myself whether it is worth saving at all."

- ARCHMAGE ZEPH





JIM VALENTINO, PUBLISHER
ANTHONY BOZZI, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING

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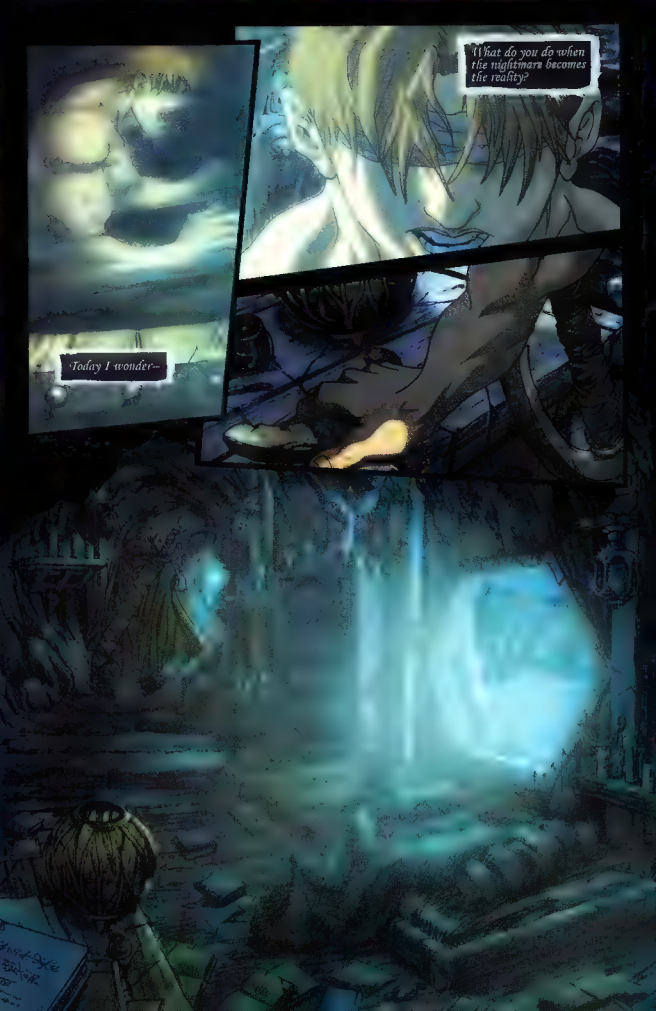
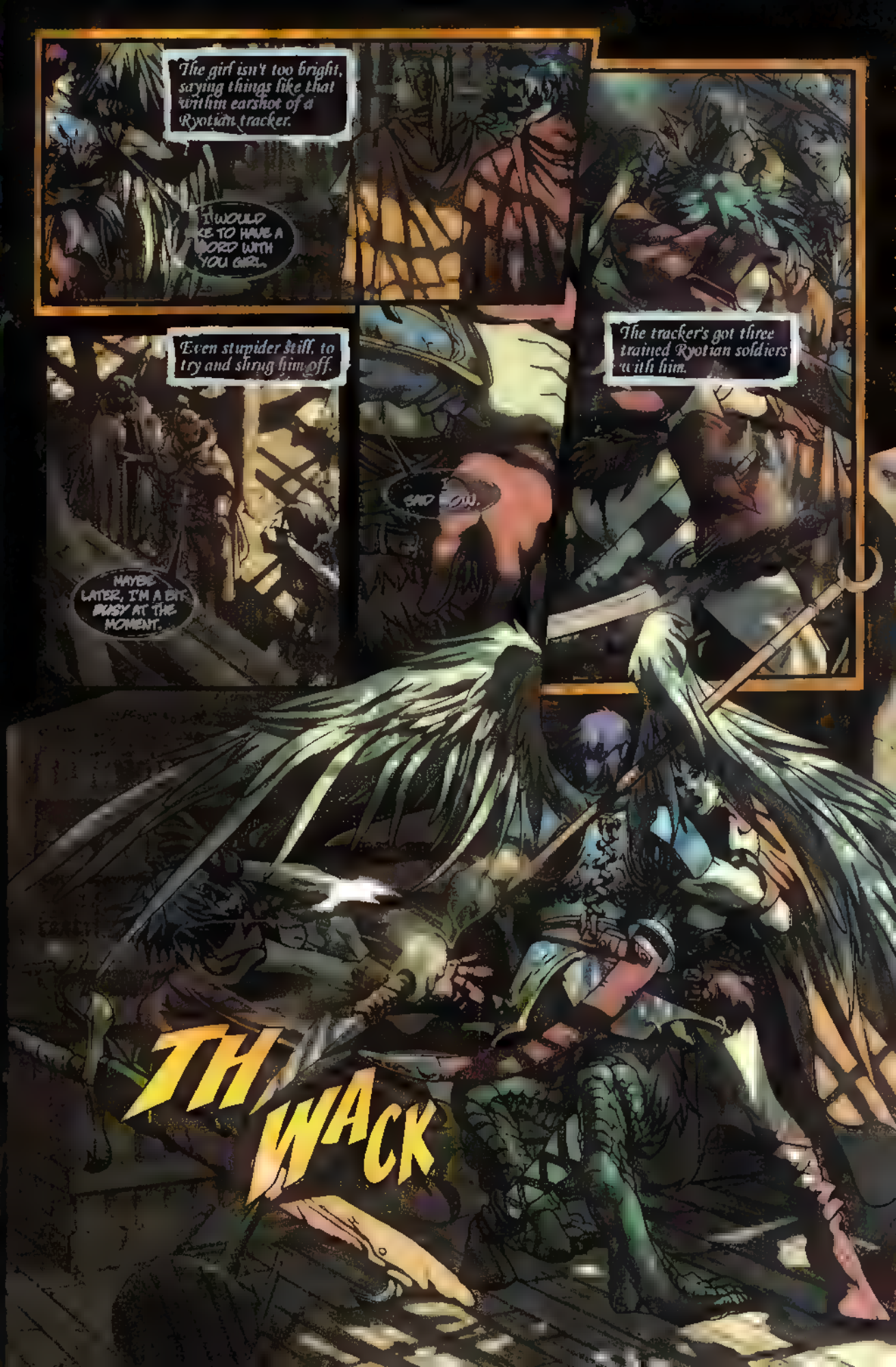
I have lived a long time. Too long perhaps.
I have fought, for longer than I care to remember, against the tireless advance of the ice, and against the tyrants that came to conquer.
In my nightmares, the world becomes a frozen wasteland, with no hope of saving.


Today I wonder--
What do you do when the nightmare becomes the reality?

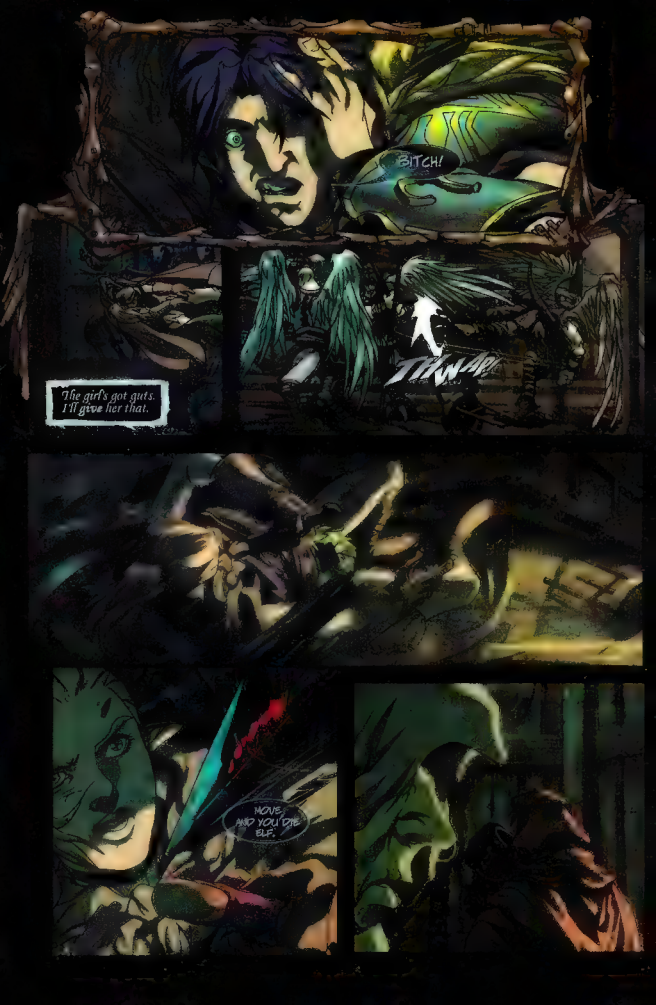
DEAREST MARISAMA,
I KNOW NOT WHETHER THIS LETTER WILL REACH YOU.
STILL, I HOPE YOU KNOW MY PRAYERS ARE WITH
YOU AND ELENE. I'VE HEARD SHE HAS JOINED THE
SKIRMISHERS? JERELL WOULD HAVE BEEN PROUD.
I WISH HE WERE HERE NOW. I WISH YOU ALL WERE
HERE, AND THAT THE WORLD WOULD AWAKEN FROM
THE NIGHTMARE THAT GRIPS IT. THIS SHOULD HAVE
ALL ENDED THE DAY THE DATARANS WERE DEFEATED.
THE DAY MALAGEN FELL DEAD ON THE PLAINS. BUT
IT IS NOT. FROM BEYOND THE VEIL OF DEATH THE
DRAGON EGANKO EXACTS IT'S PRICE UPON US FOR
DISTURBING HER SLUMBER. THIS EMERETH THE ICE
FLOWS REACHED THE SOUTHERN LOWLANDS, FREEZING
THIS YEAR'S CROP AND FORCING THE FINAL VESTIGES OF
DWARVEN CIVILIZATION TO MOVE UNDERGROUND.
THE RYOTIAN ARMY HAS MOVED IN AND ENSLAVED
ANYONE FOOLISH ENOUGH TO REMAIN. I KNOW NOT
WHAT COURSE OF ACTION TO TAKE. THE ADVANCE OF
THE ICE IS AS I FEAR, UNSTOPPABLE. THERE IS NOTHING
LEFT BUT TO ACCEPT FATE, AND MAKE MY PEACE
I'M TIRED 'SAMA MY TIME HAS RUN OUT. THE TAPPING
OF POWER I HAVE USED TO EXTEND THE NATURAL
COURSE OF MY LIFE HAS NOT GONE UNNOTICED.
EVEN NOW, I BEGIN TO SEE SIGNS THAT THE NAMELESS
ONES HAVE BEGUN THEIR SEARCH FOR ME. I CANNOT
EVADE THEM FOREVER. I CANNOT EVADE DEATH FOREVER.
WHEN YOUR GRANDCHILDREN LOOK TO YOU, AND ASK
WHY THEIR WORLD WILL NOT BE THERE FOR THEM TOMORROW.
PLEASE TELL THEM THAT THE FAILURE WAS MINE. TELL
THEM THAT I WAS NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO PREVENT IT.
TELL THEM THAT I'M SORRY. WHEN I PASS FROM THIS
WORLD, I WILL GO AND TELL FLESSA, G'DAR, JERELL AND
DELEZAR AS MUCH. THIS WILL BE THE LAST TIME YOU HEAR
FROM ME. NOTHING REMAINS TO BE SAID OR DONE
TREASURE THESE DAYS MARISAMA, FOR THEY WILL NOT
COME AGAIN.

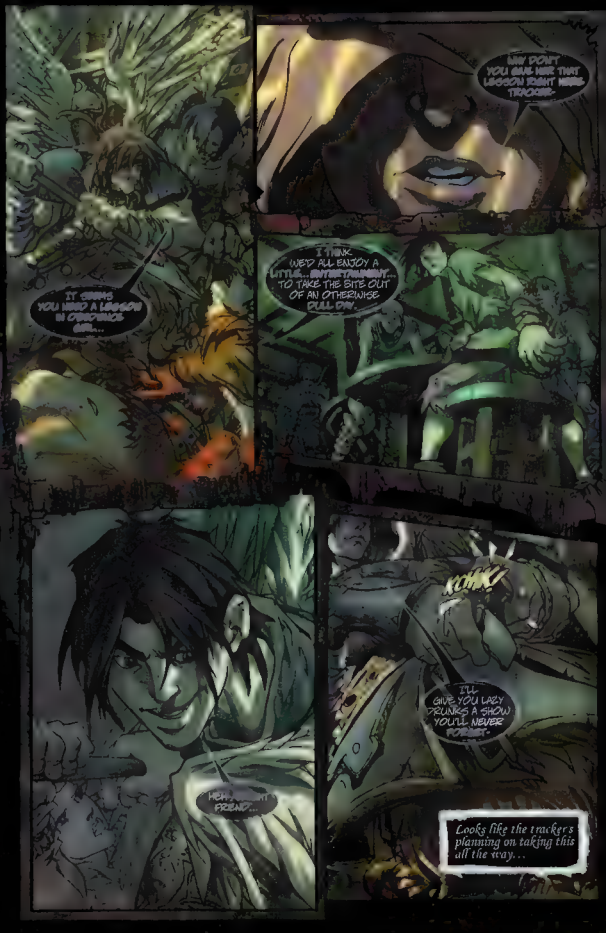
Somewhere...
It's been three months since I've been this close to civilization.
I would've stayed in the highlands, but someone's been looking for me.

BARTENDER!
I'M LOOKING FOR INFORMATION
THERE AREN'T ANY LIBRARIES AROUND HERE ANYMORE GIRL. ALL THAT'S LEFT IS MY BAR, AND I DON'T GET BY, BY SELLING WORDS.
PLEASE, WE'VE GOTTA A LONG WAY-
I'M LOOKING FOR A MAN...A BLIND MAN...
HE'S A SORCEROR...


The girl isn't too bright, saying things like that within earshot of a Ryotian tracker.
I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A WORD WITH YOU GIRL.
Even stupider still, to try and shrug him off.
MAYBE LATER, I'M A BIT BUSY AT THE MOMENT.
AND NOW.
The tracker's got three trained Ryotian soldiers with him.
TH WACK

The armor they're wearing is forged from Aethril, immune to magical energy.
I SAID NOW GIRL!
THE MAN YOU WERE ASKING ABOUT, HE'S A WANTED SORCEROR. AND ME? IT'S MY JOB TO BRING [illegible] TO JUSTICE.
USE OF [illegible] IS PUNISHABLE BY DEATH IN THIS REALM IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T HEARD.
Looks like she's in for it now.
IT'S ALSO PUNISHABLE BY DEATH TO ACCOST OR SEEK OUT MAGIK-USERS FOR ANY OTHER PURPOSE THAN PUNISHMENT.
SO TELL ME LITTLE GIRL...
?!?
KRAK
LET GO OF ME!

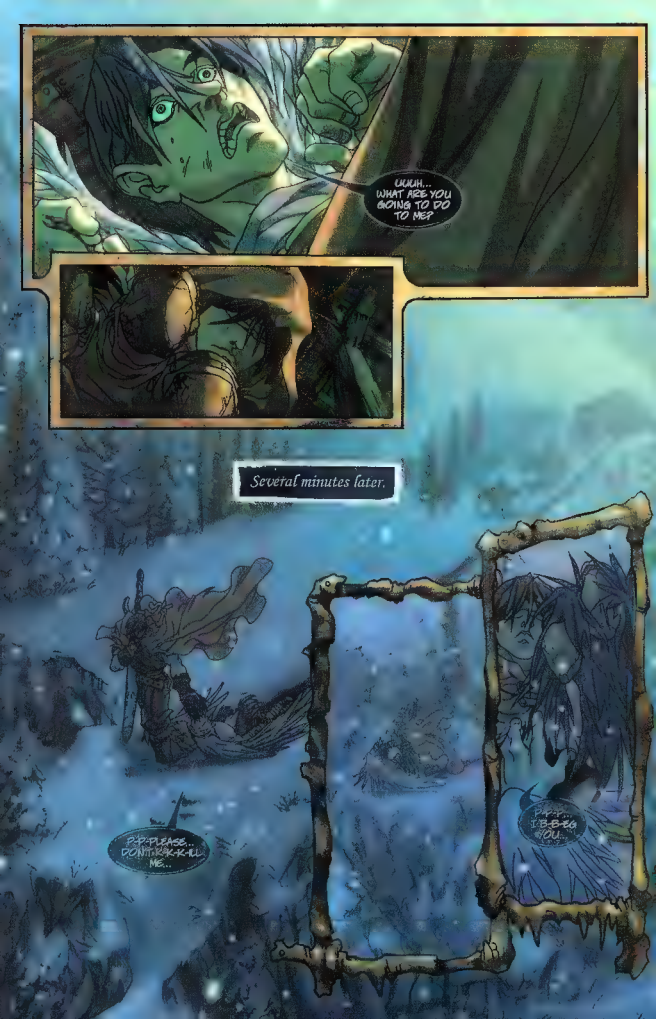

BITCH!
THWAP!
The girl's got guts. I'll give her that.
MOVE AND YOU DIE ELF.


WHY DON'T YOU GIVE HER THAT LESSON RIGHT HERE TRACKER-
I THINK WE'D ALL ENJOY A LITTLE... ENTERTAINMENT... TO TAKE THE BITE OUT OF AN OTHERWISE DULL DAY.
KCHAK!
I'LL GIVE YOU LAZY DRUNKS A SHOW YOU'LL NEVER FORGET-
Looks like the tracker's planning on taking this all the way...

And no one can stop him.
CLANG!
He's got trained bodyguards as killers, and his armor prevents any type of magical attack.
It works a lot better...
...when you're wearing it.
One thing about Aethril armor though-

YEEAAAARRRGGGHHH!!!
KILL THAT MAN!!
KER-CHOK!!
YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW HAPPY I AM THAT YOU CHOSE TO TAKE THAT PARTICULAR PIECE OF ARMOR OFF FIRST.

CLUBCUHH...
COWARD


UUUH... WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO TO ME?
Several minutes later.
P-P-PLEASE.. DON'T K-K-KILL ME...
I'LL B-B-BE GOOD...

SEVERAL WEEKS AGO HE LED AN ATTACK ON THE TEMPLE OF LARIA IN SOUTHERN VANTYRE. HE RAPED AND SLAUGHTERED THE ENTIRE ORDER. THE PRIESTS WERE PACIFISTS, AND THEIR MAGIK WAS CLERICAL IN NATURE.
THAT WAS A BETTER END THAN HE DESERVED.
MASTER ZEPH! WAIT!!!
PREDATORS AND THE RYOTLANAS WILL BE BACK IN FORCE BEFORE LONG.
ZEPH WAIT! LET'S ME! ELENE!

SLURP
DON'T GO! I'VE COME SO FAR TO FIND YOU...
DOES YOUR MOTHER KNOW YOU'RE HERE?
MOTHER HAS BEEN DEAD SIX MONTHS AND...
SHE DIED BEFORE YOUR LAST LETTER REACHED. I READ IT, AND CAME HERE TO FIND YOU...
MARSHALL
I'M SORRY... I... I DIDN'T KNOW...

ZEPH! YOU CAN'T GIVE UP!
PEOPLE ARE SUFFERING ZEPH!
PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS SUFFERING.
THE WORLD HAS GONE MAD WITH SUFFERING! AND SOON, IT'S GOING TO PUT ITSELF OUT OF IT'S MISERY.
THERE IS NOTHING I CAN DO.

I'VE BEEN TRYING TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THIS FOR THE LAST TWO HUNDRED YEARS-SO DON'T PARE LECTURE ME ON TAKING A DIFFERENCE-
I'VE SO THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE JUST GOING TO SAY. I'M NOT EVEN TRY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

ARE WE FINISHED, THEN?
NOT BY HALF TAHJAERA..
GO HOME ELENE.
COME ON!

Meanwhile, at a remote Ryotian outpost at the edge of civilized world, unbeknownst to our heroes...
Others have taken notice of Zeph's most recent exploits...
TRACKER JARO'S IS HERE TO SEE YOU M'LORD.
SIGH SEND HIM IN.
I HOPE YOU'VE GOT A LOT OF MONEY ON HAND REEVO.
HRRREEEER
I'VE COME TO COLLECT.
WHO'VE YOU BROUGHT ME THIS TIME?

BIRHON, HIGH NECROMANCER OF THE ASHKEN ORDER.
KK-CHANG
HMPH. YOU SHOULD HAVE GOT BIRHON TO TELL HIM THEN.
CONSIDER THIS ONE A BARGAIN ON YOUR END. I HAD TO KILL HIM SIX TIMES... AND WHEN YOU SEE ALKAR-TELL HIM HE OWES ME 300 PIECES FOR BRINGING HIM IN FIRST.
WHAT?
ALKAR'S DEAD. SEVERAL DAYS NOW. ONE OF HIS MEN WANDERED IN THIS MORNING.
THUD
HE WAS ALL IN HYSTERICS, BABBLING SOMETHING ABOUT ALKAR AND THE OTHER TWO IN HIS PARTY GETTING THEMSELVES DEAD.

- THEY'RE SAYING HE DID IT.
FIT THE DESCRIPTION AND EVERYTHING-ALTHOUGH IF YOU ASK ME HE IS JUST A BLOODY MYTH TO KEEP THE PRICES OF THE REAL HIGH ROLLERS DOWN-AFTER ALL, IF...
THEN YOU'RE GOING TO GO GET IT FOR ME.
GET ME HIS CONTRACT.
GGGLL... COME ON JAROS! THE IMPERIALS HAVE HAD A PRICE ON HIS HEAD FOR THE LAST TWO CENTURIES! NO ONE'S BEEN ABLE TO BRING HIM IN...I DON'T EVEN HAVE HIS CONTRACT HERE...IT'S DOWN AT THE CENTRAL ARCHIVE...

AND WHILE YOU'RE AT IT, YOU CAN GET ME ALL THE INFORMATION YOU HAVE ON THE ARCHMAGE ZEPH.
To Be Continued

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WARLANDS™

THE AGE OF ICE

Created by Pat Lee and Adrian Tsang

Pencils/SFX **Pat Lee**
Plot
Story & Plot **Adrian Tsang**
Background Assists **James Raiz**
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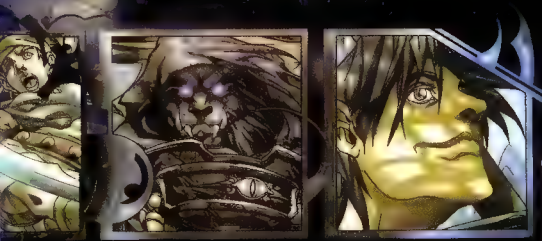

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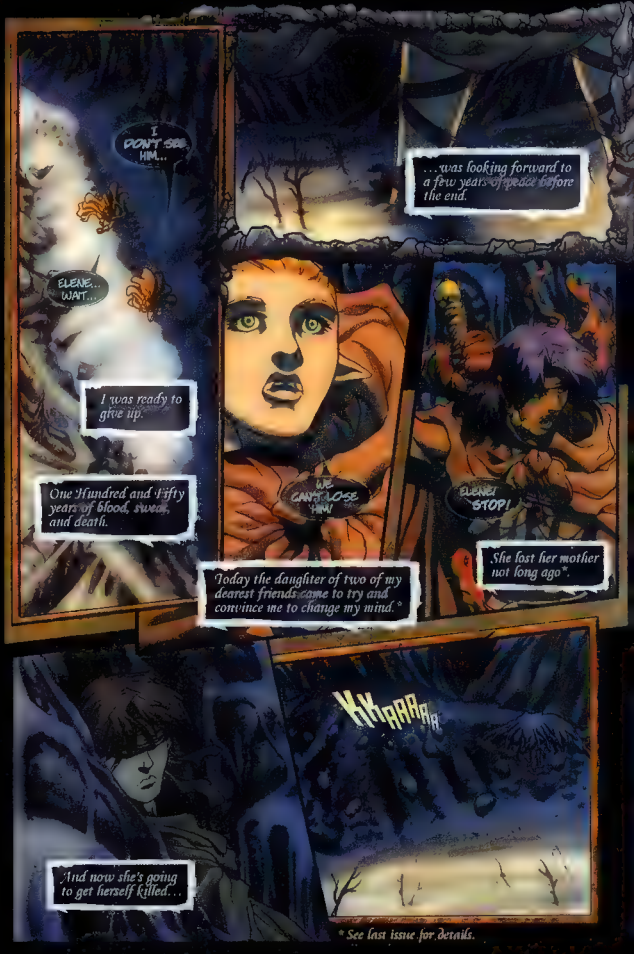


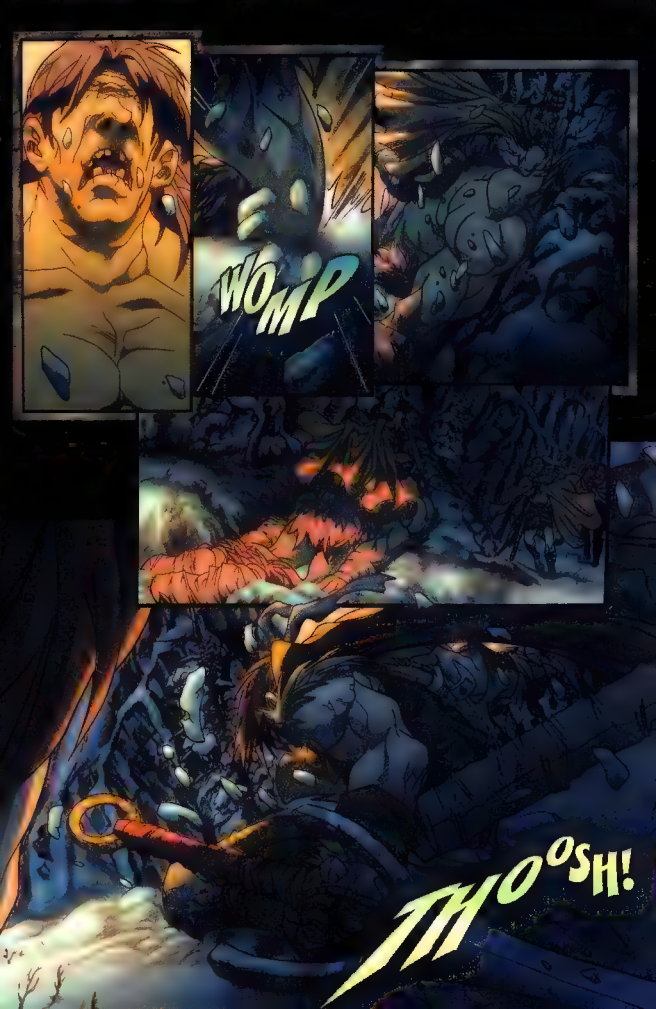
* See last issue for details.

BEHIND YOU!
KKARRRRA
HEY ONE EYE!
COME DANCE WITH TAHJARRA!
THOOM
RRRRRR...

MOOOM
THOOP
THUK
THUK

WHOOM
KRAAK
SHRAAK
WOOSH

AERELLA'S BLOOD...


WOMP
THOOSH!

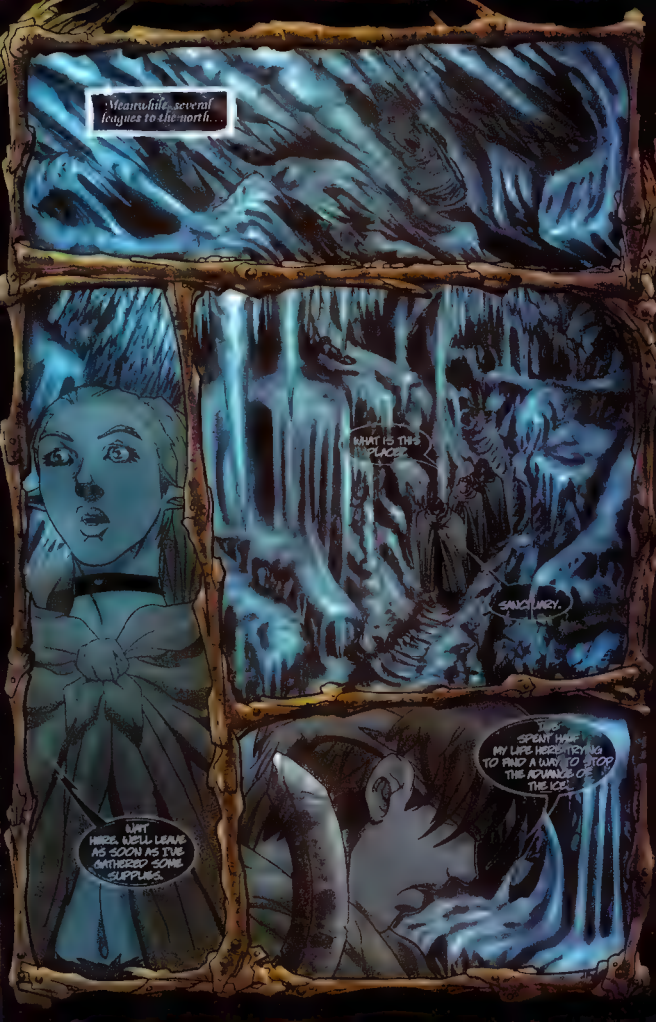
I WOULD THINK THE TWO OF YOU WOULD KNOW BETTER THAN TO ENTER SUCH A NARROW CANYON IN THIS AREA.
COUNT YOURSELVES FORTUNATE THAT ONLY ONE SNIDOW AWAITS. WAITING FOR YOU, THEY USUALLY HUNT IN PAIRS.
KLANG!
I TRIED TO WARN HER.
AND YOU ARE?
A TRACKER THEN?
A GUIDE. NOTHING MORE. I'VE NO INTEREST IN RYDTAH BOUNTY.
TAHJARRA DARRAL. YOUR COMPANION HERSEY ME OUT OF ESSENTA TO TRACK YOU DOWN.

AND SINCE YOU'VE OBVIOUSLY FOUND WHO YOU'RE LOOKING FOR, I'LL TAKE THE BALANCE OF MY PAYMENT NOW AND BE ON MY WAY.
THAT SHOULD COVER IT.
CHING
CHING

AND THREE TIMES THAT AMOUNT IF YOU CAN GET ILENE TO THE SHIPYARDS AT BARROSDALE AND SAFELY ONTO A TRANSPORT BACK TO YAITANIMA.
PLUS EXPENSES.
AGREED.

NOW HOLD ON JUST A MINUTE HERE!
WE CAN WORK OUT THE DETAILS LATER! EVERY TRACKER WITHIN THREE LEAGUES WILL HAVE HEARD THIS MAGIK I USED! JUST NOW TO DISPATCH THE GIANT.
WE HAVE TO GET OUT OF SIGHT. MY SANCTUARY ISN'T FAR FROM HERE. WE CAN STAY THERE UNTIL NIGHTFALL.
???

Several hours later.
THERE'S NO SIGN OF THEM.
POACHERS PERHAPS?
NO. IT'S HIM. AND HE'S CLOSE. I CAN SMELL IT...
NAKE CONTACT WITH BARRY VILLAGE, CITY AND OUTPOST WITHIN 6 LEAGUES. IF HE SURFACES, I WANT TO KNOW ABOUT IT.
6 LEAGUES???
DON'T THINK ASHAR DO. IF I CAN'T HAVE ZEPH'S HEAD AS ATTROPHY, I'LL TAKE YOURS INSTEAD...


Meanwhile, several leagues to the north...
WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
SANCTUARY.
I'VE SPENT HALF MY LIFE HERE TRYING TO FIND A WAY TO STOP THE ADVANCE OF THE ICE!
WAIT HERE. WE'LL LEAVE AS SOON AS I'VE GATHERED SOME SUPPLIES.

SO DON'T
I DON'T USUALLY HAVE
I'VE WOKEN UP TO THAT SIGHT EVERY MORNING FOR THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS...

COME ON.
THIS IS DRAU BLACK... IT SHOULD BE IN THE HANDS OF SOMEONE THAT KNOWS HOW TO USE IT INSTEAD OF GATHERING DUST OVER A WARM FIRE.
YOU'LL BE LUCKY IF YOU'RE EVER EVEN HALF AS WORTHY OF HOLDING THAT SWORD AS IT'S PREVIOUS OWNER WAS...
WE'RE LEAVING. NOW.
FRIENDLY FELLOW, ISN'T HE?

WELL GO AS FAR AS WE CAN BEFORE NIGHTFALL AND MAKE CAMP UNTIL MORNING.
I would grieve sometimes, for the generations to follow. For the children that would grow up in the world we created.
I've seen so much
death.
now I would be out of tears to shed.
The gods are cruel indeed, if
break the news of a dying world...
...to the only daughter of my two dearest friends before I pass from this world.

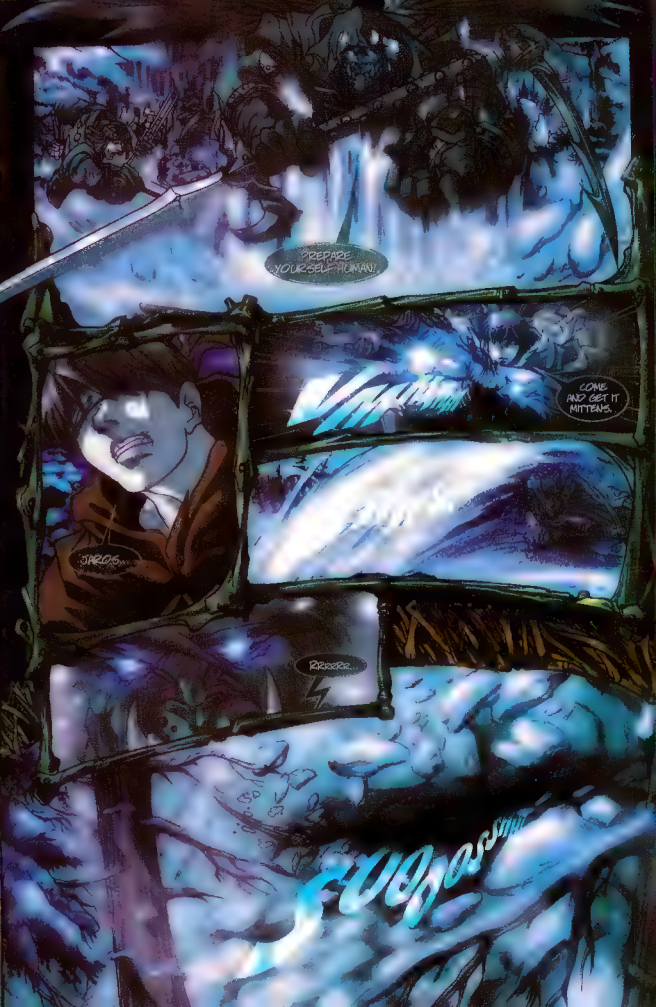
* See Warlands Volume I and Warlands Special: Three stories for details.

DON'T WORRY, SANA. THIS ONE WILL BE GETTING MARRIED TO SOME LUCKY GIRL SOON ENOUGH I THINK-THEN WE CAN RETURN THE FAVOR!
AAAAH!

AMBUSH!
SKWURCH!!!

ARM YOURSELVES!
GGGGLVE...
KRAAK!
THWAK!
I'M ALWAYS ARMED SORCEROR...

KRAAKK!
YOUR AIM LEAVES SOMETHING TO BE DESIRED!
KLANG!
NETHRIL ARMOR IS IMMUNE TO MAGIC GIRL!


PREPARE YOURSELF HUMAN!
COME AND GET IT MITTENS.
JAROS...
RRRRRR...

PTANG!
SLASH!
STOP!
THHWAK!

GO BACK TO THE IMPERIAL BEDCHAMBERS WHERE YOU BELONG KEZEA-I AM AN IMPERIAL TRACKER. YOUR ORDERS MEAN NOTHING TO ME.
THAT'S ENOUGH JARDS. OUR ORDERS ARE TO TAKE THESE HUMANS INTO CUSTODY.
MY ORDERS COME DIRECTLY FROM THE HIGH CHANCELLOR. THE ELF AND THE BARBARIAN ARE TO BE PUT TO WORK IN THE MINES. AS FOR THE MAGE--
--HE'S COMING WITH US. THE EMPRESS WOULD LIKE A FEW WORDS WITH HIM...

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BANISHED KNIGHTS
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Banished Knights
PREVIEW

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WARLANDS

BANISHED KNIGHTS

PREVIEW

CREATED BY
PAT LEE & ADRIAN TSANG

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Backgrounds by James Raiz
Colors by Ramil Sunga
Flats by Erik Sander
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What does a Vampire Want?

A difficult question.

Like any mortal, he has desires, and dreams.

And like any mortal faced with an absence in his life, or absence of life in this case, he struggles to fill that absence, to find purpose.

He is no more inherently evil than inherently good, and is driven by desires that are uniquely his own.
He is immortal, but he can die.

He is a creature of myth.
But he is born of the mortal coil.
He hunts, but is himself hunted.
He is contradiction given form.
Thus the question remains: What does a Vampire Want?
He wants many things...

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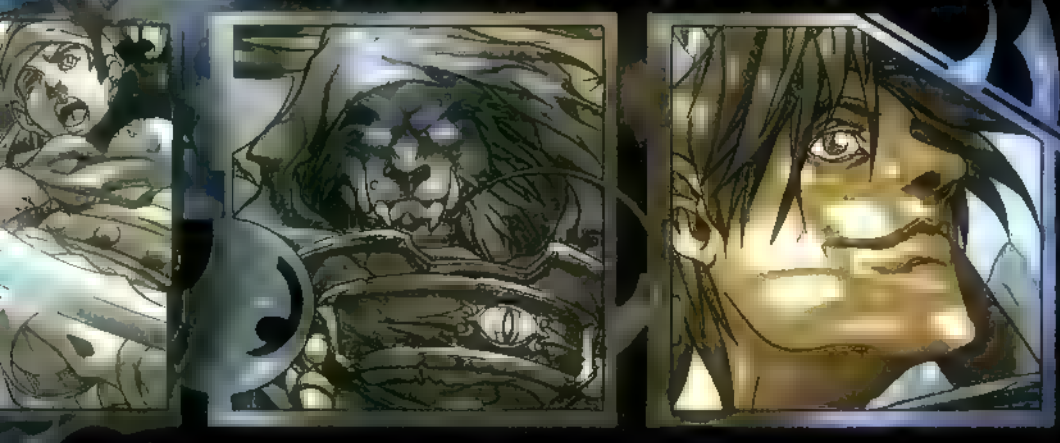
*Special thanks to Ramil Sunga, Alan Wang and Michael Turner.



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I have nightmares about them some nights. The nameless ones. That was what Velezar called them... wraiths of neither good, nor evil beings of nothingness.

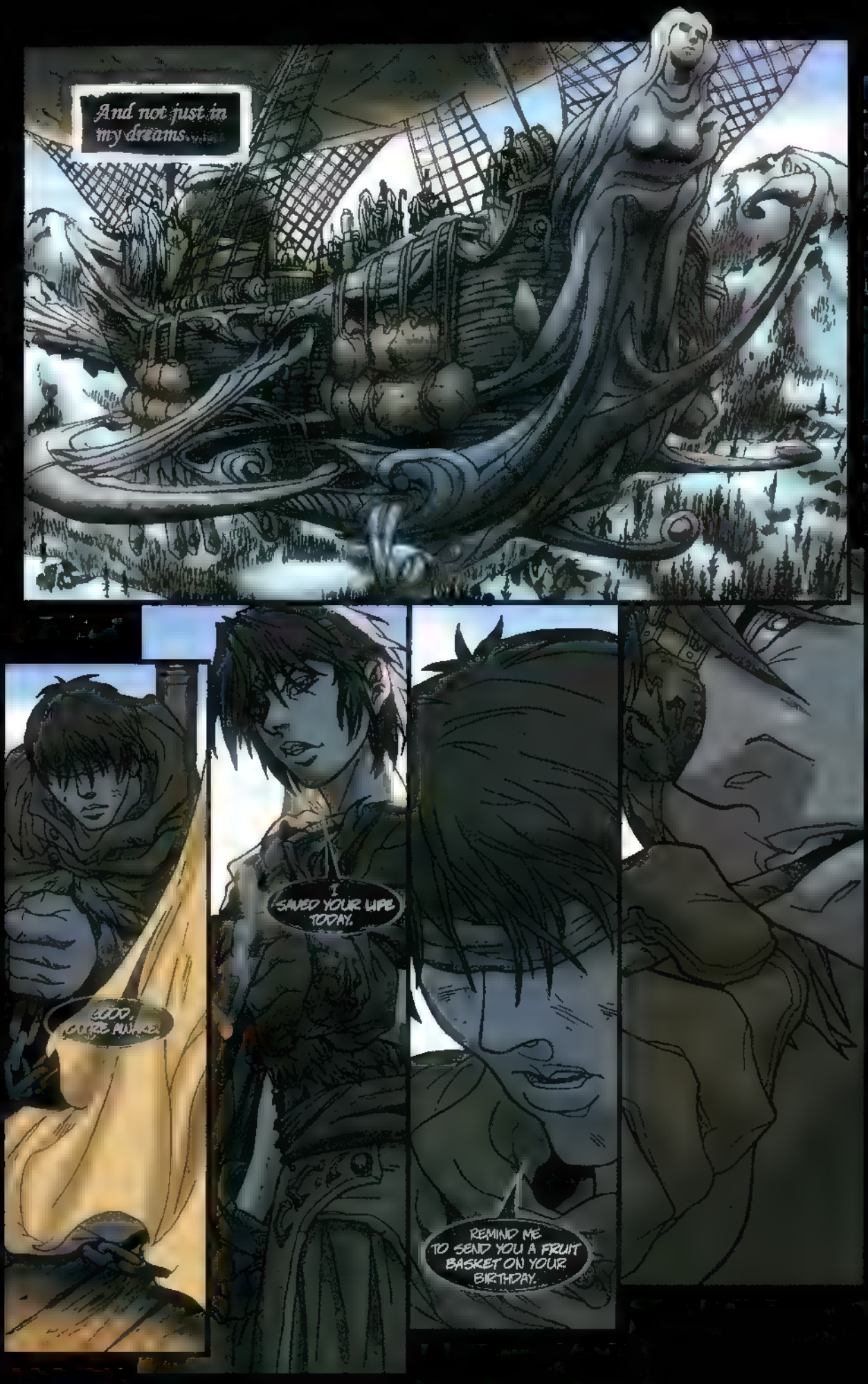
Any who are taught the path of magik are told the tale.

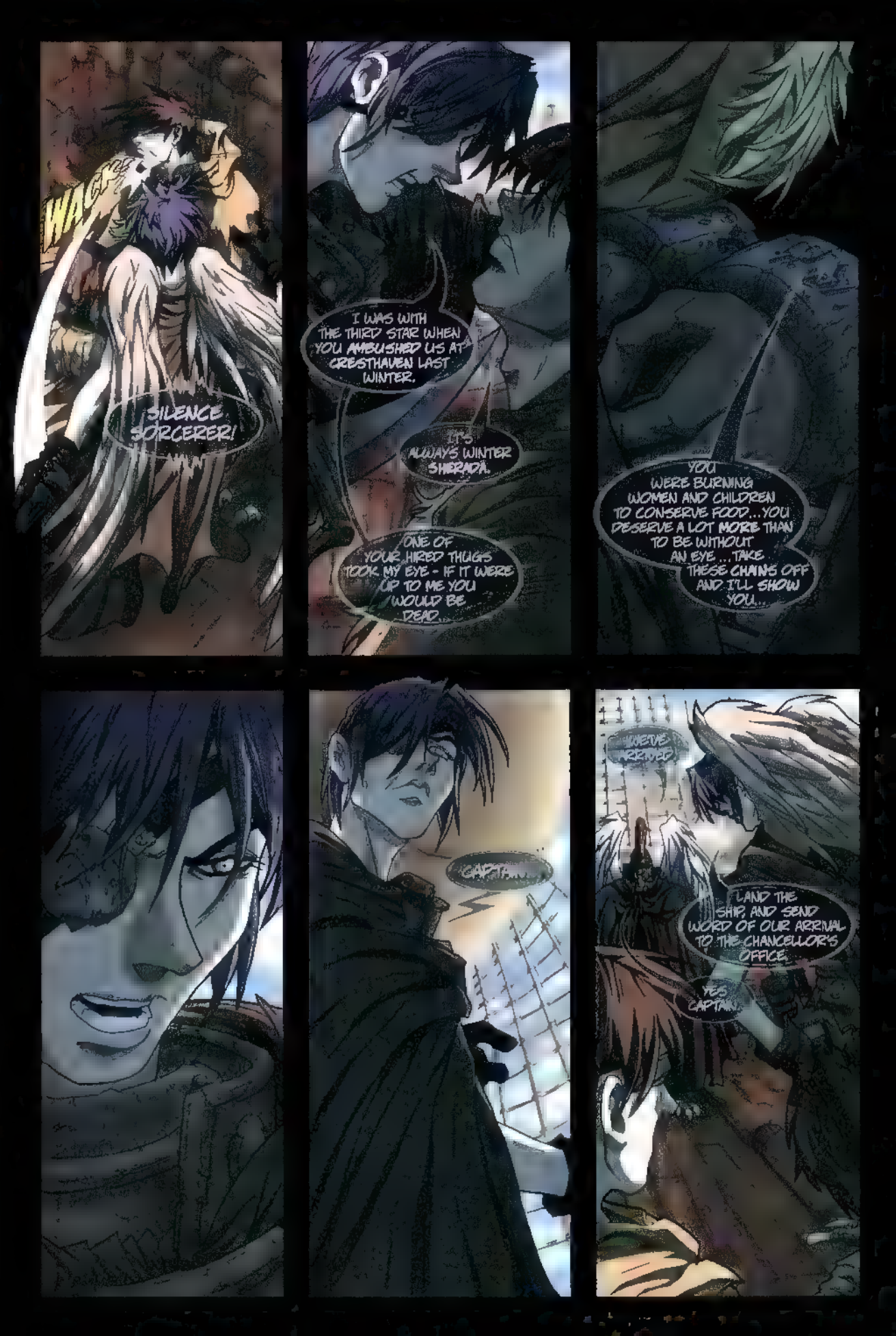
The universe is a very delicate balance of energy, and whenever a mortal, be he a mage or otherwise

-Taps in to that energy, a void is briefly formed, to be filled a moment later once more, like a stone thrown into the ocean.

Sometimes however, when the pull of magik is strong, or frequent enough, the void remains. And from this void the nameless ones emerge.

They are coming for me...


And not just in my dreams...
I SAVED YOUR LIFE TODAY.
REMIND ME TO SEND YOU A FRUIT BASKET ON YOUR BIRTHDAY.


WACK!
SILENCE, SORCERER!
I WAS WITH THE THIRD STAR WHEN YOU AMBUSHED US AT CRESTHAVEN LAST WINTER.
IT'S ALWAYS WINTER SHERADA.
ONE OF YOUR HIRED THUGS TOOK MY EYE - IF IT WERE UP TO ME YOU WOULD BE DEAD.
YOU WERE BURNING WOMEN AND CHILDREN TO CONSERVE FOOD...YOU DESERVE A LOT MORE THAN TO BE WITHOUT AN EYE ...TAKE THESE CHAINS OFF AND I'LL SHOW YOU...
CAPT...
WE'VE ARRIVED
LAND THE SHIP, AND SEND WORD OF OUR ARRIVAL TO THE CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE.
YES CAPTAIN.

HMPH.
...EN THE EMPRESS IS FINISHED WITH YOU 'MASTER' ZEPH, YOU'LL WISH YOU'D HAD TO DEAL WITH ME.
THOK!

Several hours later.
WELCOME TO THE DUNGEONS OF ADDUM.
CONSERVE YOUR STRENGTH. THE SHACKLES, ALONG WITH JUST ABOUT THE ENTIRE CITY, ARE COMPOSED OF AETHRIL. WHAT MEAGER MAGICAL ENERGY YOU'LL BE ABLE TO HARNESS WON'T BE WORTH THE EFFORT.
SURELY YOU HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN AN OLD FRIEND?
WHO ARE YOU?

ARAGON...
AT YOUR SERVICE MASTER ZEPH.
I'D HEARD YOU'D BEEN CAPTURED AND EXECUTED.
CAPTURED YES, BUT EARLY ON I WAS ABLE TO... ENTERTAIN HER MAJESTY IN SEVERAL ARENAS. SUBSEQUENTLY SHE LET ME LIVE.
AS YOU CAN SEE, I'VE CURRENTLY FALLEN OUT OF FAVOR WITH HER MAJESTY.
PERHAPS YOU'VE BEEN BROUGHT HERE TO BE MY REPLACEMENT. THE APPETITES OF THE IMPERIAL COURT CHANGE WITH THE SEASONS.
YOU CAN DROP THE PRETENSE ARAGON.
YOU'RE A THIEF, AND A MURDERER, AND WHEN YOU DIE THE WORLD WILL BE A BETTER PLACE. WHY ARE YOU TELLING ME THIS?
VERY WELL...

THE GUARDS ARE COMING FOR YOU...
T-CHICK!
LISTEN CAREFULLY-THERE IS NO PLACE FOR PETTY RIVALRIES IN THIS PLACE. I TELL YOU THIS AS A FORMER BROTHER IN ARMS: THERE ARE BOTH DELIGHTS AND TERRORS TO RIVAL THOSE IN ALL THE WORLD HERE IN AZZUM.
YOU MAY KNOW THE DELIGHTS FIRST - AND IF THE EMPRESS SEES FIT, YOU WILL KNOW THE TERRORS. WHEN THAT HAPPENS YOU WILL WANT TO LEAVE THIS PLACE.
WHEN YOU DO, YOU MAY NOT HAVE A FRIEND BUT YOU HAVE AN ALLY...
There's fear in his voice--
--Not a man at all accustomed to the feeling.
ON YOUR FEET!

It isn't exactly putting me at ease either...
Aragon is a cunning man, and at least an adept as far as his magik goes--
He's a liar, a thief, and a murderer on his good days--
But he's no fool.
And despite his reputation, I have every reason to believe he's telling the truth...

Later...
seem to notice.
I'm making a mental note of the route we take, and how many armed guards I encounter on the way. Too many.
Even with the shackles off, I'd have a hard time pulling enough magic to get out of here alive. Let alone in and out of the mines.
Looks like I've got to go along with things here until I can figure something out.

THE SORCERER IS HERE TO SEE YOU HIGHNESS.

From this room, the woman on that throne has put the combined empires of the Eastern [illegible] beneath her feet.

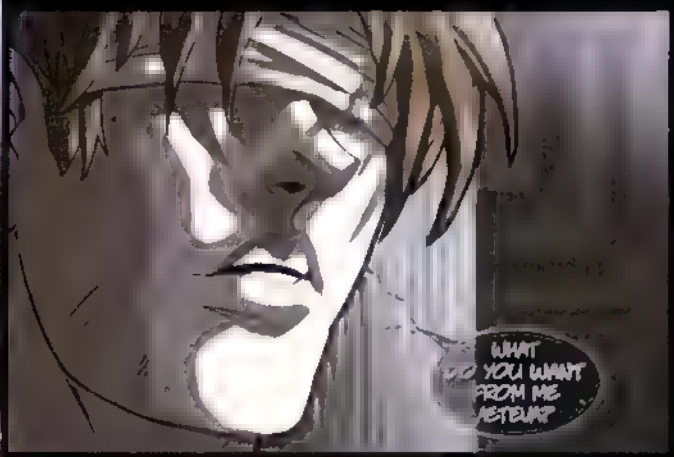
Don't let her looks fool you.

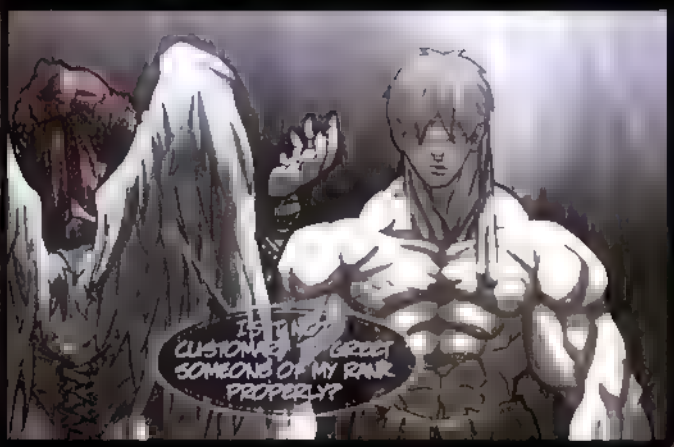
AH YES, COME IN, I'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU.

REMOVE HIS BONDS.

CLANG!

She's a brilliant tactician, and that sword on her hip isn't just for decoration.
AH, THE INFAMOUS ARCHMAGE ZEPH... YOU'RE A DIFFICULT MAN TO FIND.


WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME AETEVA?


IS THIS CUSTOMARY TO GREET SOMEONE OF MY RANK PROPERLY?

I THINK YOUR SISTER WOULD TAKE OFFENSE.

MY SISTER IS EMPRESS IN KYOTO. I AM EMPRESS HERE.
THOUGH SOON ENOUGH I WILL BE BOTH.
MMM. IS THAT WHY YOU SUMMONED ME HERE? TO JOIN YOU? IF YOU'VE BURNED MEN SUCH AS ME FOR DECADES.
IF YOU JOIN ME I CAN MAKE IT WORTH YOUR WHILE.
NOT SUCH AS YOU I THINK.
NOT EVEN ONCE.

LOOK AT ALL THAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED? YOUR PEOPLE ARE STARVING, FIGHTING AND DYING AROUND YOU WHILE WE ALONE PROSPER. WE ARE AN OASIS AMIDST THE FROZEN WASTES.
YOU STOLE THE MAGIC AND SCIENCE FROM THE ELVES AND DWARVES, AND YOU ENSLAVE ANYONE AND EVERYONE YOU FIND. I DOUBT ANYONE ELSE WOULD CALL THIS PLACE AN "OASIS."
WE ADAPTED THE TECHNOLOGY. AND AS FOR THE SLAVES, DO YOU THINK THEY WOULD FARE BETTER STARVING IN THE COLD?
ENOUGH. UNLIKE YOU, I DON'T HAVE THE LUXURY TO SIT AROUND FOR A FEW DECADES AND PIFFLE OVER ETHICS.
I TOLD YOU I WANTED YOUR ASSISTANCE. BEFORE YOU GIVE ME YOUR FINAL ANSWER...
LET ME SHOW YOU WHY...

THE MINES BENEATH THE CITY DESCEND SEVERAL LEAGUES BELOW THE SURFACE.

THE VEINS OF AETHRIL ORE DEPOSITED HERE ARE THE RICHEST I'VE EVER ENCOUNTERED.

We use the ore for everything. We forge armor and weapons, and even as fuel for the machines that keep the cold from freezing our cities.

It is the key to our greatness.

If you're so great, what do you need my help for?

THE WASTES CAN BE HARSH MASTER ZEPH. WE ALL NEED ALLIES AT ONE POINT OR ANOTHER.

THIS IS MY PERSONAL TINKERER: GHERAS. DON'T BOTHER SAYING HELLO, I HAD HIS TONGUE CUT OUT A LONG TIME AGO.

PROTECTING TRADE SECRETS YOU UNDERSTAND.

NOT THAT HE WOULDN'T COMPLAIN ABOUT HIS QUITE FOND OF THE GOLD HE RECEIVES FOR HIS WORK.

MORE TO THE POINT: THIS WORLD IS DYING. IT DOES ME NO GOOD TO RULE A WORLD THAT HAS NO FUTURE.
AND IT TOOK ALL THIS FANCY MACHINERY OF YOURS TO DISCOVER THAT?
AND WHERE MAY I ASK, DID YOU GET THAT RIDICULOUS IDEA?
WHY FROM ONE OF YOUR OWN KIND NO LESS.
NOT HARDLY. BUT IT WILL TAKE ALL THIS 'FANCY MACHINERY' AS YOU SO EUDOQUENTLY PUT IT, TO SAVE
HOW WONDERFULLY ARROGANT OF YOU TO ASSUME THAT OTHERS CANNOT SUCCEED WHERE YOU YOURSELF HAVE FAILED.
I BELIEVE YOU'VE MET ARAGON. WHEN YOU ARRIVED. HE TELLS ME YOU TWO HAVE A HISTORY, TOGETHER.
HE'S BEEN MOST HELPFUL IN GETTING US TO THIS POINT.
FOR ALL THE GOOD IT DID HIM.

ARAGON IS A BRILLIANT SORCERER, AND A SCIENTIST. THE PROBLEM IS HE IS ALL TOO AWARE OF THESE THINGS, AND THUS, AT TIMES, MUST BE SHOWN HIS PLACE. I WILL WELCOME HIM BACK TO COURT WHEN THE TIME COMES.
SO HE'S DISARMED YOUR BED AND PEDDLED YOU SOME FANTASIES ABOUT SAVING THE WORLD TO ESCAPE THE HANGMAN'S NOOSE THEN?
NOT HARDLY.

WE HAVE CONSTRUCTED A DEVICE THAT, WHEN PROPERLY POWERED, CAN GENERATE ENOUGH HEAT TO REVERSE THE FREEZING THAT GRIPS THE WORLD. THE EQUIPMENT IS BEING READIED AS WE SPEAK. THE CALCULATIONS HAVE BEEN FINISHED. ALL WE NEED IS THE POWER SOURCE.
ARAGON ASSURES ME THAT WITH BOTH OF YOUR POWERS COMBINED, YOU WILL EASILY POSSESS ENOUGH MAGICAL POWER AND KNOW-HOW TO COMPLETE THE DEVICE.
THEN TOMORROW OVER LUNCH WE SAVE THE WORLD, AND THEN TOAST TO THE LIMITLESS GOODWILL OF THE SCION OF RYOTIA, WHO GRACIOUSLY SACRIFICES HER TIME AND RESOURCES TO THE BETTERMENT OF ALL THINGS.

YOUR CYNICISM GROWS TIRESOME. I WILL MAKE IT SIMPLE FOR YOU: I HAVE YOUR COMPANIONS TUCKED AWAY IN THE LOWER LEVELS OF THE MINES. REFUSE ME, AND THEY DIE.
IF YOU TAKE TOO LONG TO ANSWER ME, THEY MAY DIE ANYWAY. AETHRIL MINERS ARE NOT KNOWN FOR THEIR LONGEVITY.
A SIMPLE CHOICE, MASTER ZEPH. TRY TO SAVE THE WORLD. IN EXCHANGE, I OFFER YOUR LIFE AND THOSE OF YOUR FRIENDS.
--YOU'VE GOT PROBLEMS OF YOUR OWN TO WORRY ABOUT.
?
A TEMPTING OFFER, BUT I DON'T BELIEVE I'LL BE NEEDING YOUR HELP.

YEEAARRH!!!
YOUR DWARF IS ON FIRE.
THANK YOU FOR THE HOSPITALITY EMPRESS, BUT I'VE GOT SOME FRIENDS TO MEET.
KILL HIM!

THERE!
SURRENDER SORCERER, THERE IS NO ESCAPE!
WHO SAID ANYTHING ABOUT ESCAPING?

The elevator seems to be falling.
Maybe this wasn't such a good...

NO HUMAN COULD SURVIVE A FALL LIKE THAT.
THEN BRING ME HIS BODY!
ASSEMBLE YOUR BEST MEN. FIND HIM.
Either way I want him captured and returned to me by sunset.
To Be Continued

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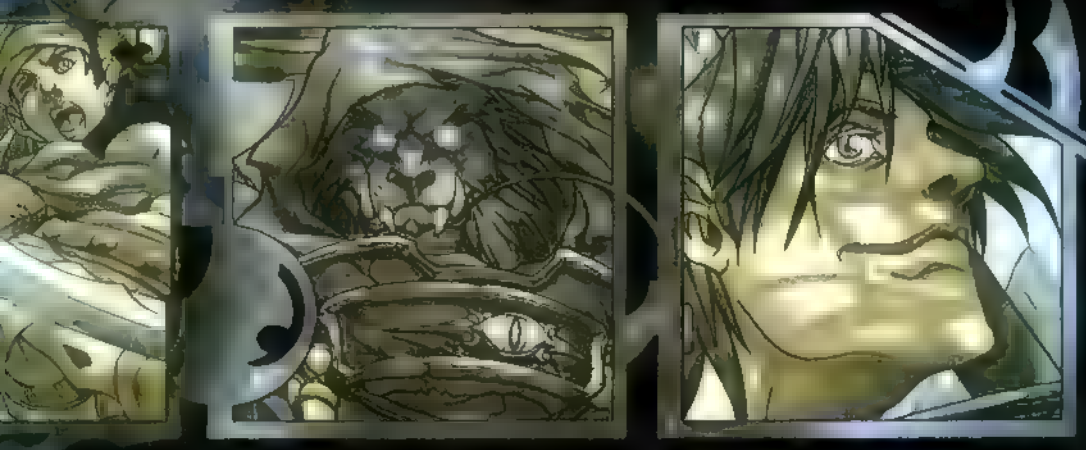

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The whirlpool spits me out somewhere deep beneath the city. Feels like I've been underwater for days.
BANDITS! LOOK!
I try to get up.
There's fluid in my lungs, and I don't think it's water...
Nothing but children... by the looks of things I'm still somewhere inside the mines.
CAN'T BE...

Nope, he should check if I'm actually dead first.
Can't say I blame him though, I don't imagine too many men have washed out into the snows.
Shivering and asking for a meal and a warm fire.
HEY, OU THERE!
GRRRR... I TOLD THOSE INCOMPETENTS A THOUSAND TIMES NOT TO DUMP BODIES INTO THE MAIN SHAFT
BOY! TAKE THIS ROTTING PIECE OF DUNG TO THE BURNERS BEFORE IT STARTS SPREADING PUTRIDS AMONG THE OTHER GUARDS...
Good instincts on this one, it takes him a second to realize I'm too close for him to bring that big spear of his to bear.
Too late.

THWAP!
KR
AK!
THOK!
WACK!

DO ANY OF YOU KNOW HOW TO GET TO THE DUNGEON?
I DO.
TAKE ME THERE.

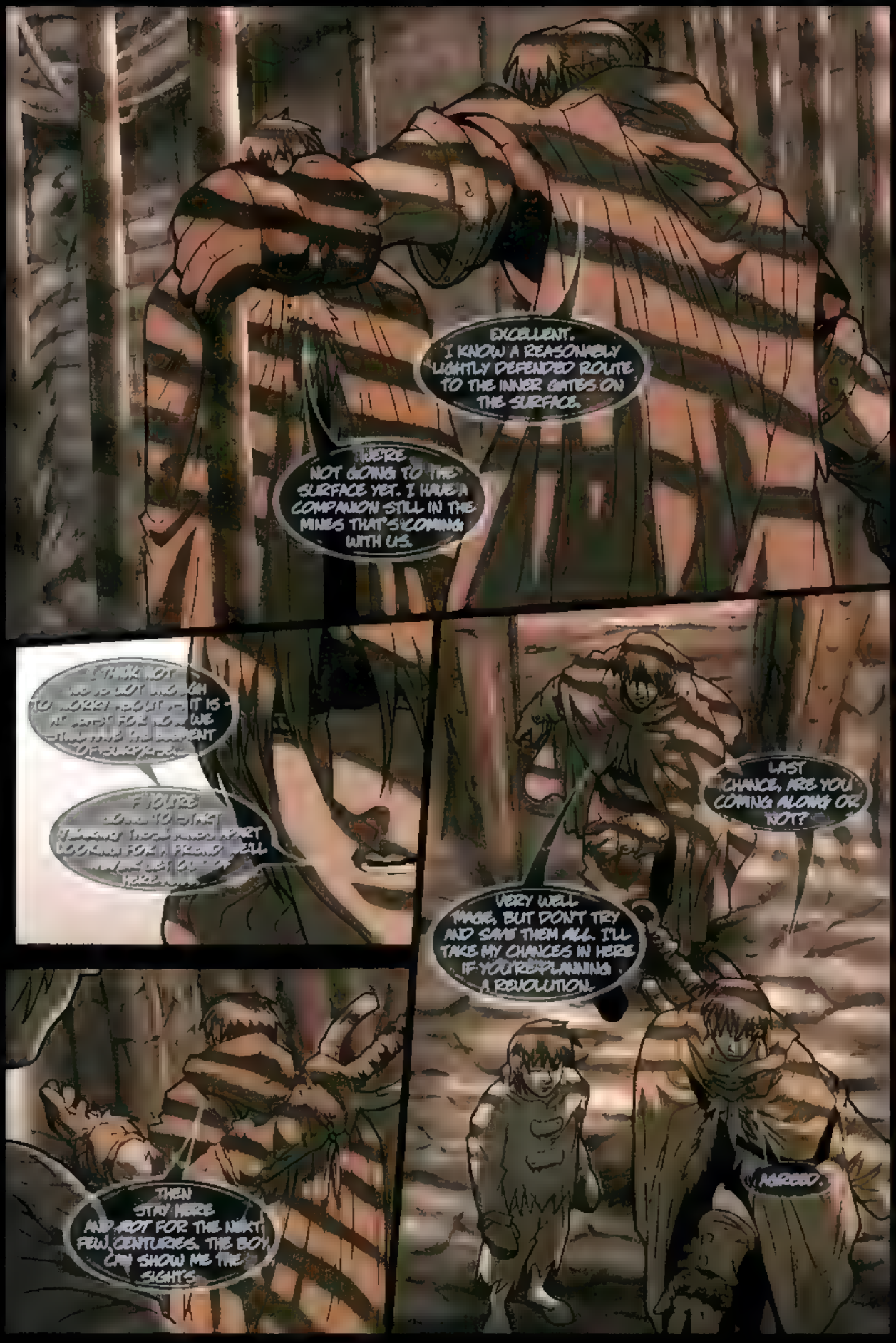
Meanwhile, hundreds of feet above...
...SO FAR THERE HAS BEEN NO SIGN. I'VE DEPLOYED SEVERAL BATTALIONS TO SEARCH FOR THE BODY.
NO, I HAVE NOT. IF HE IS DEAD, CONSIDER THIS A TRAINING EXERCISE.
IF NOT WE WILL FIND HIM, AND CORRECT THE OVERSIGHT.
SURELY, YOU HAVEN'T ASSEMBLED US HERE TO FIND A MISSING CORPSE?
I THOUGHT THE EMPRESS WANTED HIM ALIVE?
UNDERSTOOD.
I AM ORDERING YOU TO KILL ZEPH ON SIGHT. THE THOUGHTS OF THE EMPRESS ARE NONE OF YOUR CONCERN. AM I UNDERSTOOD?

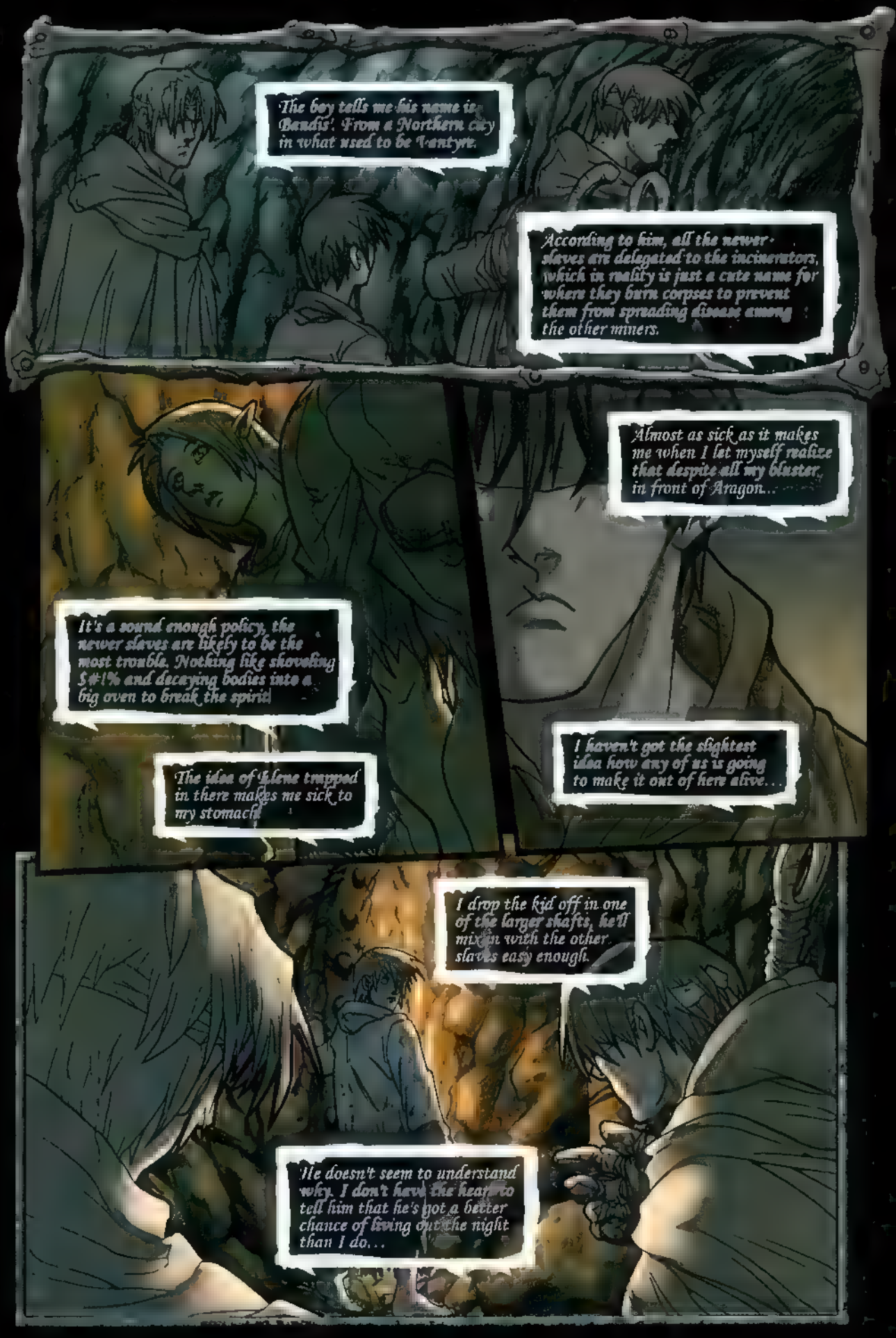
Back in the mines...
THIS ISN'T GOING TO WORK!
QUIET
I HAVE A NEW PRISONER FOR YOU.
I DIDN'T RECEIVE ANY ORDERS OF A PRISONER TRANSFER. ON WHO'S AUTHORITY?
DID YOU HEAR ME?

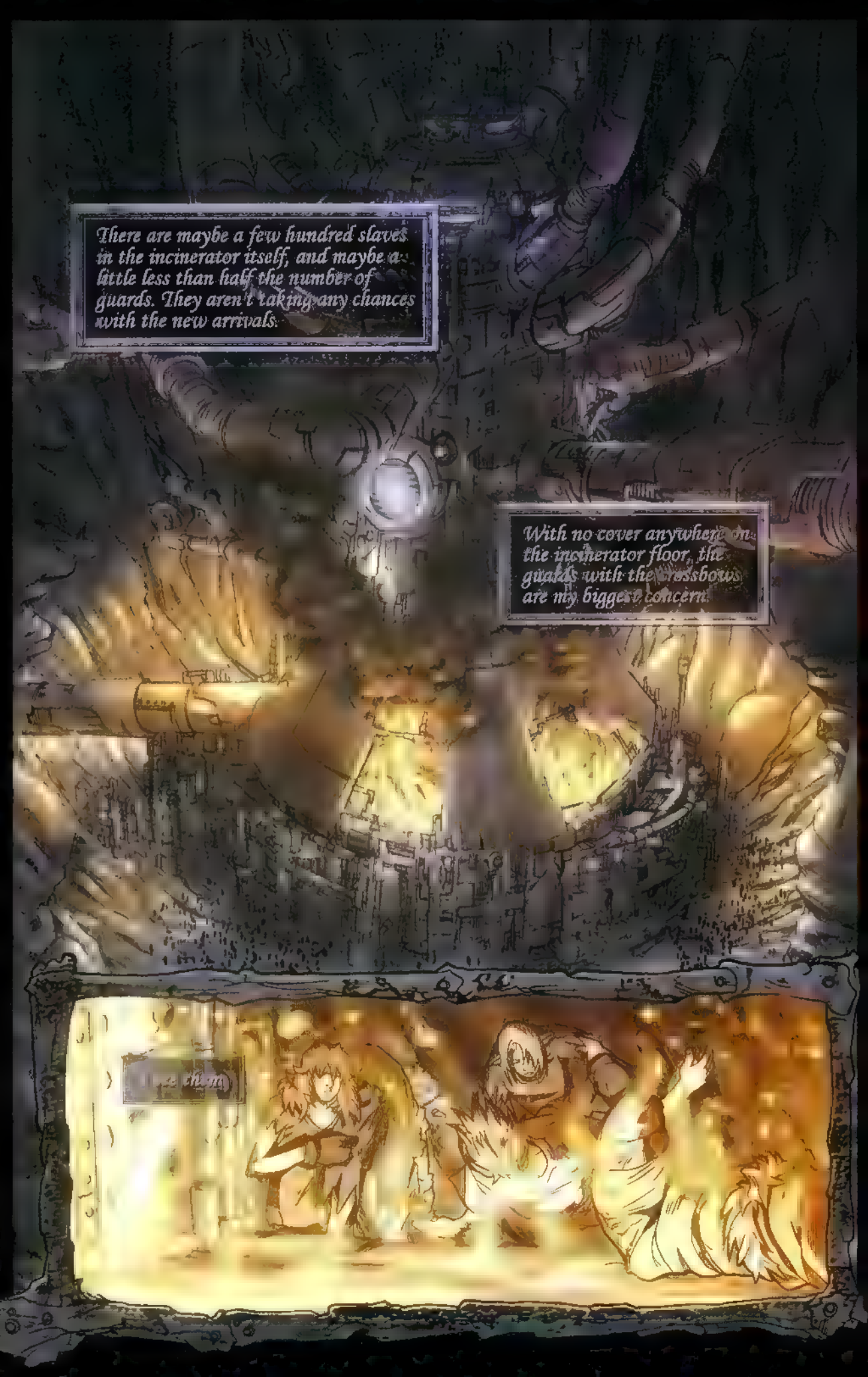
THAT'S FAR ENOUGH!
-EH?
IS EVERYTHING ALRIGHT OUT THERE?
ALRIC?

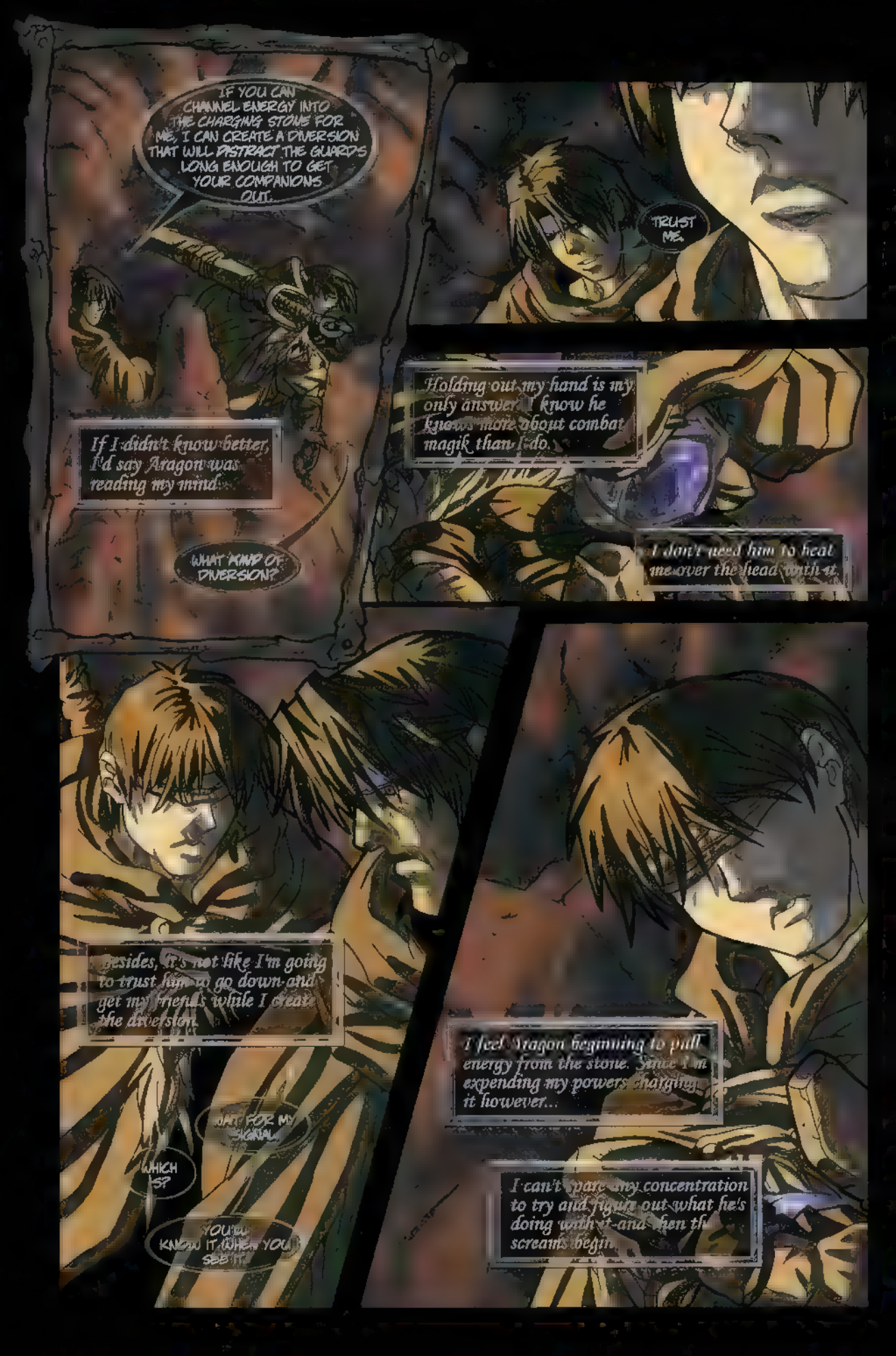
SKLURCH!
I'M TOUCHED. YOU'VE RETURNED TO FREE FORMER COMRADE IN ARMS.
DON'T FLATTER YOURSELF.
I JUST CAME BACK TO GET MY CLOTHES.
IF MY COMPANY IS NOT REASON ENOUGH TO FREE ME, THEN I'VE GOT A BETTER REASON FOR YOU.
I HAVE A CHARGING STONE.

I ALREADY HAVE A TORCH ARAGON, IN AN AETHRIL MINE, THAT'S ALL THE GOOD IT'S GOING TO DO YOU.
AH BUT YOU'RE WRONG MY FRIEND. ON MY OWN, IT'S INDEED USELESS-THE AETHRIL IN MINES DRAINS IT'S POWER... AND I CAN'T VERY WELL CHARGE IT AND CAST A SPELL AT THE SAME TIME NOW CAN I?
OH, I DON'T IMAGINE IT WILL BE ENOUGH TO DO ANYTHING SUFFICIENTLY SPECTACULAR...
BUT OVER A MILE UNDERGROUND WITH AN ENTIRE ARMY OF RYOTIANS ON TOP OF US, CAN YOU REALLY AFFORD TO PASS UP SUCH AN ADVANTAGE SIMPLY BECAUSE YOU DON'T LIKE ME?
WITH TWO OF US, ONE OF US CAN CHARGE THE STONE, WHILE THE OTHER TAPS INTO THE ENERGY.
NO, I'D PASS IT UP BECAUSE YOU'RE A LIAR, A THIEF, AND A MURDERER.
...BUT YOU'RE ALSO RIGHT.


EXCELLENT. I KNOW A REASONABLY LIGHTLY DEFENDED ROUTE TO THE INNER GATES ON THE SURFACE.
WE'RE NOT GOING TO THE SURFACE YET. I HAVE A COMPANION STILL IN THE MINES THAT'S COMING WITH US.
LAST CHANCE, ARE YOU COMING ALONG OR NOT?
VERY WELL MAGE, BUT DON'T TRY AND SAVE THEM ALL. I'LL TAKE MY CHANCES IN HERE IF YOU'RE PLANNING A REVOLUTION.
AGREED.
THEN STAY HERE AND ROT FOR THE NEXT FEW CENTURIES. THE BOY CAN SHOW ME THE SIGHTS.

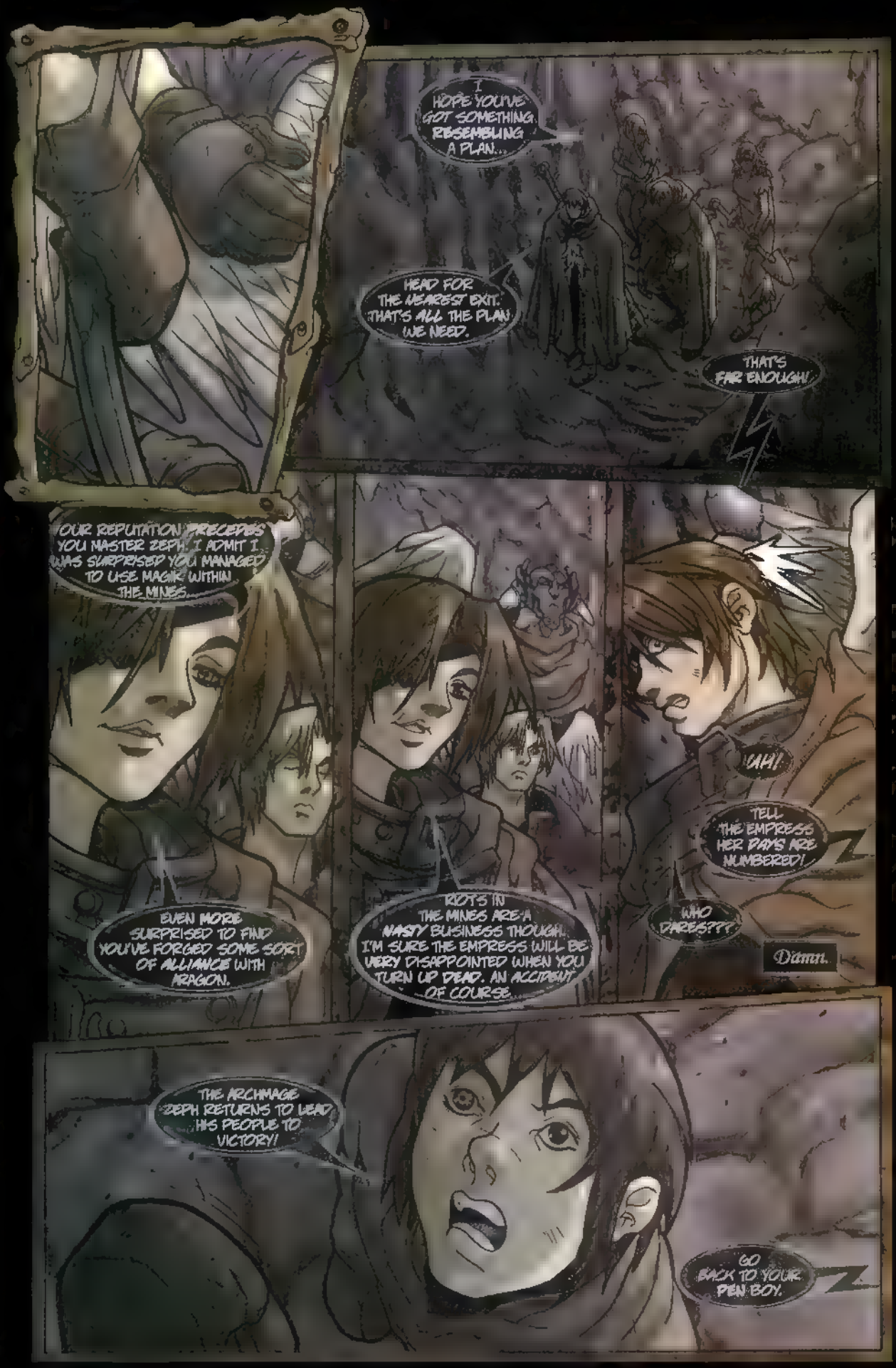

The boy tells me his name is Bandis! From a Northern city in what used to be Ventyre.
According to him, all the newer slaves are delegated to the incinerators, which in reality is just a cute name for where they burn corpses to prevent them from spreading disease among the other miners.
Almost as sick as it makes me when I let myself realize that despite all my bluster in front of Aragon...
It's a sound enough policy, the newer slaves are likely to be the most trouble. Nothing like shoveling $#!% and decaying bodies into a big oven to break the spirit!
I haven't got the slightest idea how any of us is going to make it out of here alive...
The idea of Elene trapped in there makes me sick to my stomach!
I drop the kid off in one of the larger shafts, he'll mix in with the other slaves easy enough.
He doesn't seem to understand why. I don't have the heart to tell him that he's got a better chance of living out the night than I do...


There are maybe a few hundred slaves in the incinerator itself, and maybe a little less than half the number of guards. They aren't taking any chances with the new arrivals.
With no cover anywhere on the incinerator floor, the guards with the crossbows are my biggest concern.
e them.


IF YOU CAN CHANNEL ENERGY INTO THE CHARGING STONE FOR ME, I CAN CREATE A DIVERSION THAT WILL DISTRACT THE GUARDS LONG ENOUGH TO GET YOUR COMPANIONS OUT.
TRUST ME.
If I didn't know better, I'd say Aragon was reading my mind...
Holding out my hand is my only answer. I know he knows more about combat magik than I do.
I don't need him to beat me over the head with it.
WHAT KIND OF DIVERSION?
Besides, it's not like I'm going to trust him to go down and get my friends while I create the diversion.
I feel Aragon beginning to pull energy from the stone. Since I'm expending my powers charging it however...
WAIT FOR MY SIGNAL.
WHICH IS?
YOU'LL KNOW IT WHEN YOU SEE IT.
I can't spare any concentration to try and figure out what he's doing with it-and then the screams begin.

. . . and then I realize what he's done.
AAAAAAAAHHH!!!
He's animating the corpses.
THOOPM!
And since he hasn't got enough power on tap to control more than a few, he's not bothering to.
He's just waking them up, and turning them loose.
And while it isn't pretty, I have to admit the guards look pretty damn distracted at the moment.

SHHKLUURCH!
NO TIME FOR EXPLANATIONS. FOLLOW ME, AND PICK UP WEAPON ALONG THE WAY IF YOU CAN.
It won't be long before the Ryotians can restore order. Hopefully, that will be all the time we need.
Out of the several hundred slaves in the incinerator, maybe fifty are putting up a fight, the rest are just running scared.


I HOPE YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING RESEMBLING A PLAN...
HEAD FOR THE NEAREST EXIT. THAT'S ALL THE PLAN WE NEED.
THAT'S FAR ENOUGH!
OUR REPUTATION PRECEDES YOU MASTER ZEPH. I ADMIT I WAS SURPRISED YOU MANAGED TO USE MAGIK WITHIN THE MINES.
EVEN MORE SURPRISED TO FIND YOU'VE FORGED SOME SORT OF ALLIANCE WITH MAGON.
RIOTS IN THE MINES ARE A NASTY BUSINESS THOUGH. I'M SURE THE EMPRESS WILL BE VERY DISAPPOINTED WHEN YOU TURN UP DEAD. AN ACCIDENT OF COURSE.
UH!
TELL THE EMPRESS HER DAYS ARE NUMBERED!
WHO DARES???
Damn.
THE ARCHMAGE ZEPH RETURNS TO LEAD HIS PEOPLE TO VICTORY!
GO BACK TO YOUR PEN BOY.

I ALREADY DID, AND I BROUGHT SOME FRIENDS WITH ME.
Even though she's outnumbered at least four to one, she'd still rather die trying to get me than retreat. I seem to have that effect on people.
KILL THEM ALL!
I recognize some of the men too. Veterans. Hand picked no doubt.
This is going to get messy.

MY TURN ARAGON!!
But I've still got a few tricks up my sleeve.
THIS FEELS AN AWFUL LOT LIKE A REVOLUTION ZEPH!
TRUST ME.
KKRRR
The rocks may be a little overkill - but in a battle like this, intimidation is just as important as skill.

Judging by the sounds coming from beneath these rocks, I think this one's pretty intimidated.
AGGG!!
DRAGON!
Damn it.
KEEP MOVING FORWARD!!!
All around I can see the slaves start breaking into a dead run back in to the mine.
SKRRIIPPP!
I don't blame them.

I've got to put that thing out of commission before this whole thing goes sour.
THWAAASSHH!
Din's blood, what he made of???
I can feel the ligament and muscle ripping off bone as the thing's claws tear my arm out.
I think I hear someone calling my name...
Sana?
ZEPH!!!
Sparks shoot across my vision as I hit the ground. I've got maybe a few moments before I pass out from shock.

X-TONG!
THROST
GRRR...IT'S A GOOD THING I'M BEING PAID A LOT FOR THIS.
SORRY TO INTERRUPT YOUR LITTLE PART, BUT WE CAN'T HAVE YOU GETTING YOURSELF KILLED.
I start getting a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach... and it isn't just the pain...

I get the sneaking suspicion I've been played like a fool.
WHAT'S GOING ON ARAGON? WHY ARE YOU HELPING JAROS??
There's something very bad going on here right now.
HPMH... I THINK YOU HAVE IT BACKWARDS.
IF WE ESCAPE, WE DO IT NOW.
WAIT! WE... GO... NOWHERE... UNTIL YOU TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON... YOU PLANNED THIS WHOLE THING... WHY?
IT'S REALLY VERY SIMPLE MASTER ZEPH: YOU'RE GOING TO HELP ME SAVE THE WORLD...
To Be Continued

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&
JUNGO
THE AGE OF ICE
ISSUE 5 ~ Gathering Storm

IMAGE COMICS PRESENTS

WARLANDS™

THE AGE OF ICE

Created by Pat Lee and Adrian Tsang

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Lou Kang (pgs. 16-20)
Story & Plot **Adrian Tsang**
Background Assists **James Raiz**
Inks **Rob Armstrong**
Colors **TheRealT!**
Alan Wang
Yvonne Poon
Angelo Tsang
Flats **Erik Sander**
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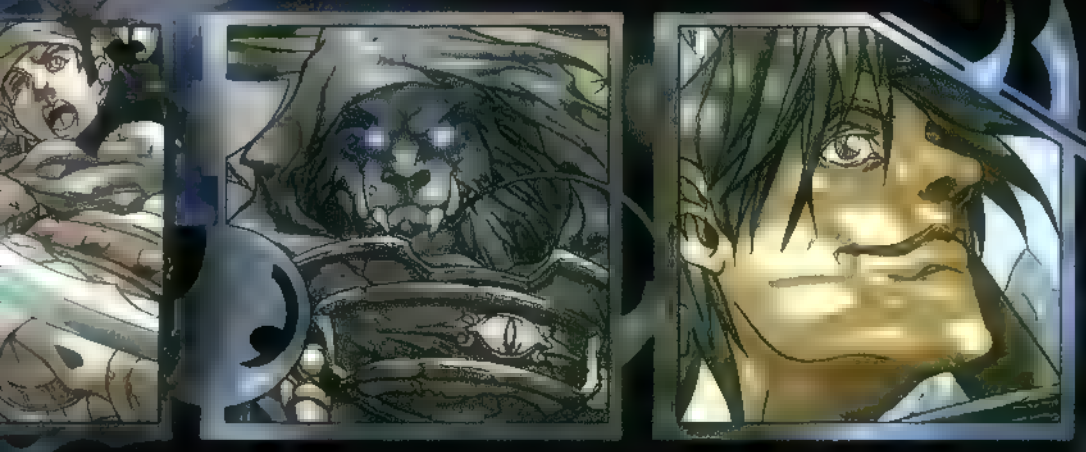

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THE MAGE HAS FREED ARAGON, AND JARDIS IS HELPING THEM ESCAPE. TAKE A DOZEN MEN WITH YOU AND KEEP THEM OCCUPIED.
IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED CAPTAIN, WE'VE GOT PROBLEMS OF OUR OWN. THE SLAVES SEEM TO THINK ZEPH HAS COME TO FREE THEM - IF WE DON'T SUBDUE THEM SOON, THEY WON'T NEED HIS HELP.
SLASH!
I'M NOT INTERESTED IN EXCUSES VARRUS. YOU HAVE YOUR ORDERS. LET THE GUARDS WORRY ABOUT THE SLAVES!

Meanwhile, hundreds of feet above...!
The gods must be restless indeed to have thrown me in with such important people.
I would never have taken Elene's offer to find her lost uncle!
-If I'd known he was really the Archmage Zeph, or that Elene's cousin was the Queen of Tattannia.
People of such importance are followed by clouds of death!
-unlike now-
THIS BATTLE IS RAPIDLY GETTING OUT OF HAND!
THIS ISN'T A BATTLE, IT'S A SLAUGHTER!

* See Warlands: Age of Ice Issue #2 for details.

EXPLANATIONS CAN WAIT. FOR NOW ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW IS THAT IT'S IN ALL OUR BEST INTERESTS TO GET OUT OF HERE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.
WHAT'S GOING ON!?
START MOVING THROUGH THE TUNNELS. ZEPH AND I WILL MAKE SURE WE AREN'T FOLLOWED.
NOT BLOODY LIKELY-
JUST GO! I'LL BE RIGHT BEHIND YOU!

JUST LIKE OLD TIMES EH ZEPH?
THAT'S WHAT WORRIES ME. KEEP THAT STONE OF YOURS CHARGED.
JUST PULL ENOUGH POWER TO SEAL THE CAVERN BEHIND US.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
WHAT I DO BEST.
STOP! YOU'RE PULLING TOO MUCH ENERGY! YOU'LL ROUSE THE NAMELESS ONES.
I KNOW.

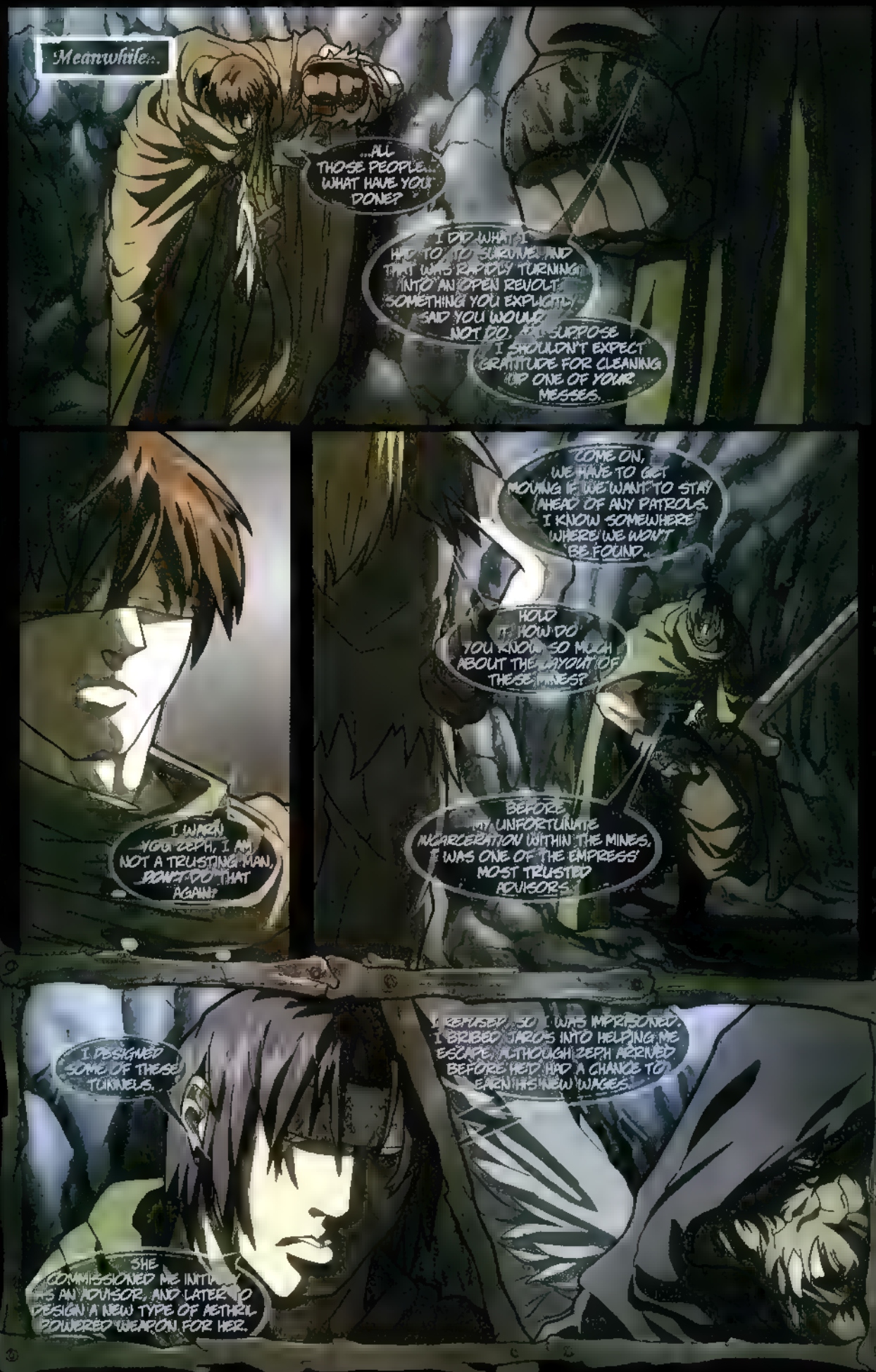
By the time I realize what Aragon is doing, it's too late to stop him.
Ever since we collectively learned of the demons known as the nameless ones, we've had to be careful of using our magik.
Sometimes, if yo careful casting, on might find you, which c be dangerous.
Magical energy attracts them, so you can only take what energy is needed, using a small measure of it to mask the spell itself.
thus ragon's attracting them on purpos

Most of them [illegible] involved in the battle they don't even notice.
Then the [illegible] starts.
They don't know how to fight them.
Plain [illegible] hurt them although they can be burned by fire. Or by magik.
Hacking them to pieces just pisses them off.
Something many of them will realize just a bit [illegible] fate.

THOUGH! YOU'LL ATTRACT AN ENTIRE ARMY OF THEM!
LET GO OF ME!
I'M GOING TO COLLAPSE THE TUNNEL. START RUNNING!
SSSSSS
SSSSS
SSSSS

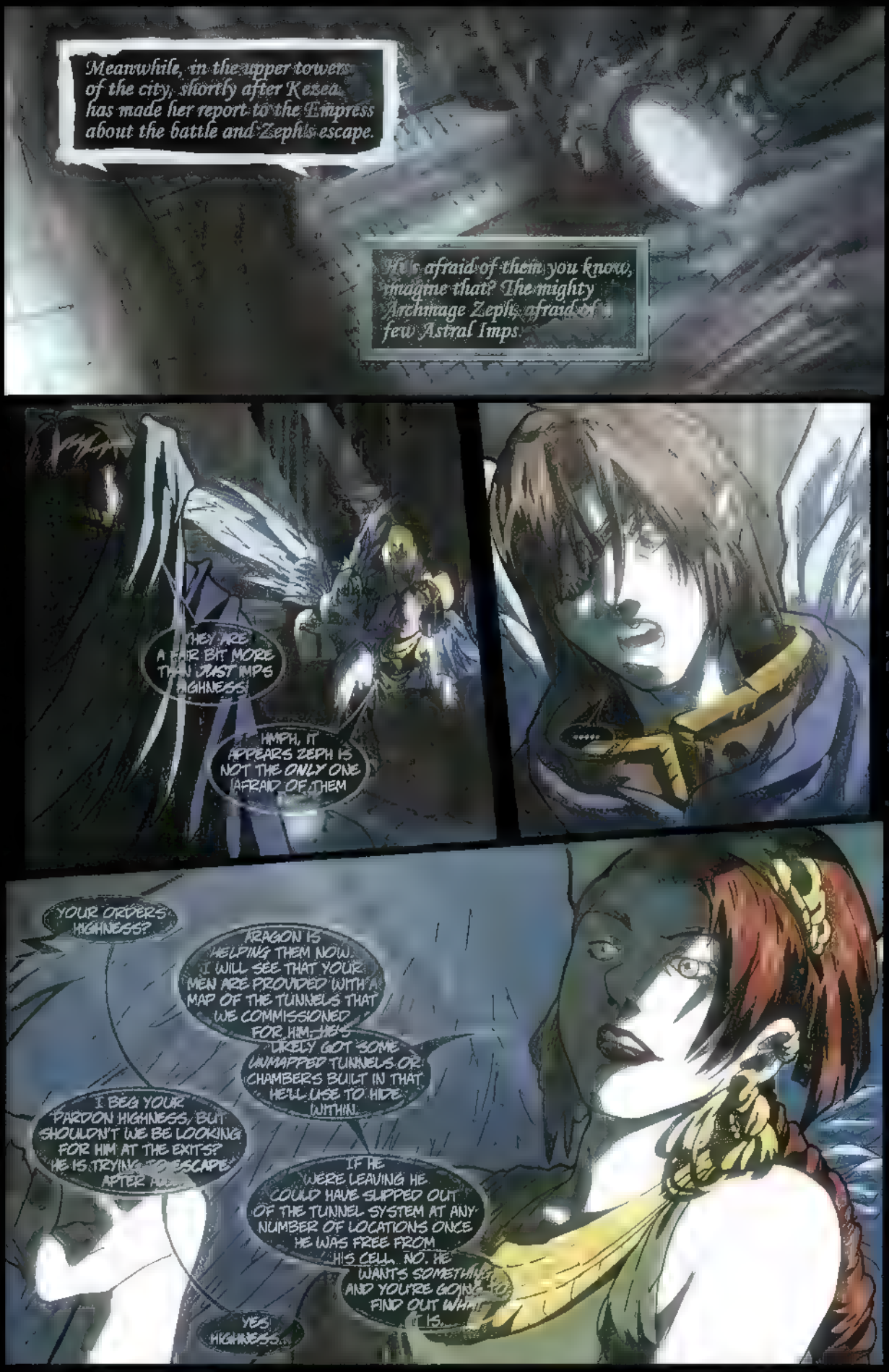
SHKLURCH!
FALL BACK!

WHAT ARE THEY???
SOME INSIDIOUS HUMAN MAGIK, NO DOUBT. IT SEEMS WE MAY HAVE UNDERESTIMATED OUR FOES. THEY'VE PROVED FAR MORE RESOURCEFUL THAN I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT.
Seal off the cavern. We can't allow any of those...things... to escape into the city.
What about our men that are still down there?
I'VE ALREADY GIVEN THE ORDER TO RETREAT, AND A SOLDIER WHO CAN'T FOLLOW ORDERS IS USELESS. LEAVE THEM. WE'RE GOING AFTER THE HUMANS.
YES CAPTAIN.



*See last issue for details.

WE'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE UNTIL YOU CAN GIVE ME SOME KIND OF GUARANTEE THAT YOU CAN BE TRUSTED.
PERHAPS THE METHRIL SHAVINGS IN HERE ARE MAKING THE TWO OF YOU STUPIDER THAN USUAL, SO LET ME REFRESH YOU ON SOME CURRENT EVENTS: YOU'RE TRAPPED THREE HUNDRED FEET UNDERGROUND WITH AN ENTIRE ARMY ABOVE YOU LOOKING TO KILL YOU. YOU'VE GOT NO FOOD, AND NO WATER, AND YOU'RE INSULTING THE PERSON THAT JUST SAVED YOUR DAMNED LIVES.
I NEED ZEPH'S HELP, BUT QUITE FRANKLY I COULD CARE LESS ABOUT A FRILLY ELVISH BITCH WHO FANCIES HERSELF A WARRIOR AND A COUNTRY BUMPKIN FRESH OUT OF THE ICE WASTES.
--SO IF YOU DON'T WANT TO COME ALONG, YOU'RE MORE THAN WELCOME TO TAKE YOUR CHANCES...


Meanwhile, in the upper towers of the city, shortly after Kezea has made her report to the Empress about the battle and Zeph's escape.
He's afraid of them you know, imagine that? The mighty Archmage Zeph, afraid of a few Astral Imps.
THEY ARE A FAIR BIT MORE THAN JUST IMPS HIGHNESS!
HMPH, IT APPEARS ZEPH IS NOT THE ONLY ONE AFRAID OF THEM
YOUR ORDERS HIGHNESS?
I BEG YOUR PARDON HIGHNESS, BUT SHOULDN'T WE BE LOOKING FOR HIM AT THE EXITS? HE IS TRYING TO ESCAPE AFTER ALL...
YES HIGHNESS...
ARAGON IS HELPING THEM NOW. I WILL SEE THAT YOUR MEN ARE PROVIDED WITH A MAP OF THE TUNNELS THAT WE COMMISSIONED FOR HIM. HE'S LIKELY GOT SOME UNMAPPED TUNNELS OR CHAMBERS BUILT IN THAT HE'LL USE TO HIDE WITHIN.
IF HE WERE LEAVING HE COULD HAVE SLIPPED OUT OF THE TUNNEL SYSTEM AT ANY NUMBER OF LOCATIONS ONCE HE WAS FREE FROM HIS CELL. NO. HE WANTS SOMETHING AND YOU'RE GOING TO FIND OUT WHAT IT IS...

WHERE ARE WE?
MY OWN PERSONAL SANCTUARY. I HAD THESE TUNNELS BUILT IN SECRET WHILE I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE DEVELOPING AN AETHRIL POWERED WEAPON FOR THE EMPIRE TO USE AGAINST IT'S ENEMIES.
THE GENERATORS...
WHICH IS?
MASTER DEPHIS GOWS AND MY OWN ARE ONE AND THE SAME MY DEAR.
THOSE OF US WITH THE POWER TO DO SO ARE ULTIMATELY OBLIGED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.
ALTHOUGH I DON'T SHARE YOUR COMPANION'S 'LEGENDARY' ALTRUISM-
THE GENERATORS WERE MERELY THE BEGINNING. THE END RESULT WAS TO BE AN AETHRIL POWERED WEAPON, ALTHOUGH EVEN THAT WAS A DECEPTION FOR MY TRUE GOAL.
THIS CHAMBER HAS BEEN SPECIALLY PREPARED. YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE ANY TROUBLE USING YOUR MAGIC IN HERE.

WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
I TOLD YOU I HAD A WAY OF SAVING OUR FROZEN LITTLE WORLD ZEPH. THAT WASN'T A LIE. BUT I'LL NEED YOUR HELP TO DO IT.
IF YOU NEEDED MY HELP ALL THESE YEARS WHY HAVEN'T YOU ASKED?
IF I HAD, WOULD YOU HAVE BELIEVED ME? EVEN WITH THE RESOURCES OF THE EMPIRE AT MY DISPOSAL IT'S TAKEN NEARLY THREE YEARS TO PREPARE.
A BETTER QUESTION WOULD BE WHY ARE WE HERE?

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF THE STONE OF AZERON?
IT'S THE STONE THAT THE DATARAN USED TO EXERT CONTROL OVER THE DRAGON SHIM'TAR DURING THE DARKLYTE CRUSADE.*
I KNOW THE STORY.
SOME PEOPLE BELIEVED THAT THE MAGICAL PROPERTIES OF THE STONE COULD ALSO BE USED TO DESTROY EGANRO'S BODY. IN THEORY, DOING SO COULD STOP THE ADVANCE OF THE ICE AND ALLOW THE SEASONS TO RETURN TO NORMAL.
IT CAN'T. IT'S BURIED BENEATH A MOUNTAIN.* YOU COULD DIG FOR A DECADE AND NOT FIND IT. I SHOULD KNOW. I TRIED IT.
HOW CAN I DO THAT?
QUITE RIGHT. THE STONE'S ORIGINAL PURPOSE WAS MERELY TO CONTROL SHIM'TAR, BUT THE DRAGON HERSELF WAS BORN OF FIRE... AND THE STONE IS IMBUED WITH THAT SAME POWER, POWER ENOUGH TO SEND THE CORPSE OF THE WURM INTO OBLIVION.
YOU SAID YOU HAD A PLAN.

I THINK ALL THIS TIME IN THE MINES HAS DULLED YOUR MIND, ARAGON.
INDEED I DO ZEPH. THE STONE IS THE KEY. AND TOGETHER YOU AND I ARE GOING TO RETRIEVE IT.
THE STONE IS THE SIZE OF A POTATO, HUNDREDS OF FEET UNDERGROUND, AND COMPLETELY UNDETECTABLE BY ANY MEANS UNLESS IT'S POWER IS BEING INVOKED.
THAT'S WHY WE'RE GOING TO GET IT BEFORE IT'S BURIED BENEATH THE MOUNTAIN.
WHAT ARE YOU BABBLING ABOUT ARAGON?
...ARE YOU TRYING TO TELL ME THAT YOU'VE NEVER EVEN CONTEMPLATED TIME TRAVEL?
-OH COME NOW. IN ALL THESE COUNTLESS CENTURIES OF DABBLING IN ALL THINGS ARCANE, AS YOUR MISERABLE LITTLE WORLD-SAVING SCHEMES FAIL ONE AFTER ANOTHER...
OF COURSE I HAVE. I COULD STAND HERE FOR A MONTH AND TELL YOU WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT PLAN.
AT BEST YOU'LL GET YOURSELF KILLED. AT WORST YOU'LL DESTROY THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE. I TAKE IT BACK, YOU'RE NOT A MORON, YOU'RE INSANE.

SIGH I WONDER WHICH THE ELDRITCH COUNCIL WOULD HAVE FROWNED ON MORE DEEPLY, COWARDICE, OR INSANITY?
I KILLED THEM AND BURNED THEIR ABBEY YOU KNOW.
I KNOW.
HYPOCRITES SUCH AS THOSE SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO LORD OVER OTHER MEN. CERTAINLY NOT FELLOW SORCERERS. IN ANY EVENT, I HAVE THOUGHT THIS THROUGH, ZEPH: DOWN TO THE VERY LAST DETAIL. THIS CHAMBER HAS BEEN PROPERLY PREPARED, I CAN REPEL THE NAMELESS ONES, AND I'VE ALREADY CHOSEN A PLACE IN HISTORY THAT WILL HAVE THE LEAST CHANCE OF CAUSING ANY DAMAGE TO OUR TIMELINE.
I EVEN HAVE A CONTINGENCY PLAN IF YOU DECIDE YOU WON'T HELP ME.
WHICH IS?

IN THE EVENT YOU CHOOSE NOT TO OFFER YOUR AID, I GIVE YOU NO CHOICE AT ALL. REFUSE ME, AND YOU AND YOUR COMPANIONS WILL NOT LEAVE THIS ROOM ALIVE.
GRRR...
YOU SPEAK OF DIRE NEED, OF TRUST, AND THEN YOU THREATEN OUR LIVES LIKE A COMMON THIEF? ONLY A FOOL WOULD TAKE ANY WORD THAT COMES FROM YOUR MOUTH AS TRUTH. DRAW YOUR SWORD, I'LL TAKE MY CHANCES.
DON'T SPEAK TO ME OF MORALITY BARBARIAN. I'VE A PLAN TO SAVE THIS WORLD AND THE RESOLVE TO ENJOY IT. KEEP WHATEVER PERVERSE MORALITY YOU'VE BROUGHT WITH YOU FROM THE TUNDRA TO YOURSELF.

REMEMBER, ZEPH: THIS IS MY DOMAIN. MY MAGIC IS AT IT'S STRONGEST. CAN YOU SAY THE SAME FOR YOURSELF? BLEEDING AND INJURED AS YOU ARE, DO YOU THINK YOU CAN DEFEAT ME?
-OR DO SO BEFORE JAROS OPENS THE BELLY OF ONE OF YOUR PRETTY LITTLE COMPANIONS.
ALRIGHT.
ONE THING AT A TIME. THE SPELL THAT WILL SEND US BACK FOR THE GEM WILL PULL A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF ENERGY.
THERE'S NO WAY WE'D BE ABLE TO MASK THAT KIND OF DISTURBANCE.
ZEPH: NO!
HOW ARE YOU PLANNING ON GETTING THE GEM?

FIRST, WE NEED TO MAKE SURE THE NAMELESS ONES WON'T TEAR US APART AS SOON AS WE BEGIN THE CASTING.
JARO-S, BRING THE ANIMAL.
I'D ADVISE YOU TO TAKE A SEAT IN ANY OF THE SMALLER CIRCLES ON THE FLOOR.

SHKLLURCH!

ARAGON!! WHAT ARE YOU DOING???
STAY IN THE CIRCLE!!!
KKRAAKK!!

NO!
To Be Continued

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Sarracini
Armstrong
JAMES RAIZ
2007

IMAGE COMICS PRESENTS

WARLANDS

THE AGE OF ICE

Created by Pat Lee and Adrian Tsang

Pencils **James Raiz**
Story & Plot **Chris Sarracini**
Inks **Rob Armstrong**
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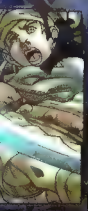

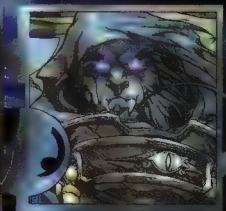

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A Ryotian prison complex. Just after dusk.
ARRGGHH!! COWARDS!! UUGHHHH! LET ME-!
--LET ME GO!!!
DON'T MAKE THINGS HARDER ON YOURSELF! YOU'RE LUCKY TO BE ALIVE!!
CLANK
CLANK
REBEL SCUM.

SLAM!
TELL ME REBEL...
WHA—?! WH-WHO'S THERE?
...TELL ME... WHY ARE YOUR PEOPLE SO PERSISTENT? IT'S LIKE THEY HAVE A DEATH WISH.
WHO... WHO ARE YOU?
WHO I AM IS NOT AS IMPORTANT AS WHAT I WANT.

WHAT D-DO YOU WANT?
INFORMATION... SOMEWHERE IN WARLANDS A SMALL VILLAGE IS MANUFACTURING WEAPONS FOR THE REBEL ARMIES. I WANT TO KNOW WHERE IT IS.
I'LL NEVER TALK. NEVER. THE REBEL CAUSE IS GREATER THAN ONE MAN. I'D RATHER DIE.
YOU'D RATHER DIE... HMM... FASCINATING. FOOLISH, BUT FASCINATING.
I DON'T EXPECT YOUR KIND TO UNDERSTAND. YOU KNOW NOTHING OF BALANCE. BALANCE BETWEEN WEAK AND STRONG, POOR AND RICH, GOOD AND EVIL. LIKE THE YIN AND THE YANG. PERFECT BALANCE. THIS IS WHAT DRIVES US.
THE AGE OF ICE HAS BEEN CRUEL. CRUEL, IT SEEMS, TO EVERYONE BUT THE RYOTIANS. THEY LIVE ROYALLY WHILE THE PEASANTS SUFFER WITH NO CROPS TO GROW, NO FOOD TO EAT... NO HEAT TO KEEP OUR CHILDREN WARM.
FORCED INTO SLAVERY WITH FALSE PROMISES OF A WARM FUTURE.

WE FIGHT TO END THIS IMBALANCE. WHY SHOULD WE DIE FROZEN DEATHS IF THERE IS ENOUGH HEAT FOR EVERYONE?
I SEE. HOWEVER, I NOTICED YOU FLAUNT ONLY. AHEM. ONE HALF OF THE COSMIC SYMBOL. SURELY THIS IS NOT BALANCE. IS THERE NO YIN TO YOUR YANG?

HMM. A SHAME YOU WERE NOT SO EASILY SILENCED ON THE BATTLEFIELD. I'M TOLD YOU HAVE QUITE THE LIST OF RYOTAN KILLS TO YOUR NAME.
OVER TWO HUNDRED RYOTANS HAVE FELT MY BLADE.
INDEED. THAT IS IMPRESSIVE. YOU ARE A DEDICATED REBEL, MY FRIEND. A PERFECT BALANCE BETWEEN BRAINS AND BRAWN, BETWEEN PATIENCE AND DETERMINATION. I FEAR MY TIME HERE MAY BE WASTED.
BUT BEFORE I HAVE THE GUARDS RETURN YOU TO YOUR CELL, ALLOW ME ONE MORE QUESTION.
WHAT'S THAT?
HAVE YOU EVER HEARD THE TALE OF THE WOUNDED DRAGON?

"There was a very poor and lonely peasant. He made a hut not a family and gave often the crops in his field struggled to grow."
"To the peasant always believing that if one shows good will toward others, good will would eventually be returned tenfold."
"One day, on his way to the market, the peasant happened upon a baby dragon lying by the roadside. The dragon was badly hurt and barely alive."
"Now while the peasant had never before seen a dragon, he had heard of them. Heard horror stories of charred flesh and villages brought to ruin.
And yet, seeing this barely breathing baby... he felt he must do something.
"For six days the peasant tended to the wounded dragon's every need. Bandaged his wounds.
Fed him water and corn. Warmed him. By the seventh day, the dragon was healed."
"But tragedy soon struck. The dragon, now alive and strong, let out a bolt of fire, engulfing the peasant in flames.
With his last breath the peasant asked the dragon why he had attacked him.
Why, after all he had done? And do you know what the dragon said?"

HE SAID 'WHAT DID YOU EXPECT? I'M A DRAGON.'
...HEH...
A MOST AMUSING STORY, EH? IT'S ONE OF MY FAVORITES. QUITE FUNNY. BUT THE TRUE BEAUTY OF THE STORY LIES IN ITS LESSON.
YEAH, WHAT'S THAT?
WE CAN ONLY BE WHO WE ARE. A PEASANT IS A PEASANT AND A DRAGON IS A DRAGON. IN THE END THE DRAGON MUST PREY ON THE PEASANT. YOU SEE, IT IS HIS NATURE AS THE STRONGER BEAST TO DEVOUR THOSE THAT ARE WEAKER THAN HE.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
THE POINT IS I DON'T BELIEVE WHAT YOU OR YOUR PATHETIC PEOPLE PREACH ABOUT THE BALANCE OF THE COSMOS. YOU ARE WEAK. IF YOU WEREN'T WEAK YOU WOULDN'T BE IN YOUR POSITION. THE RYOTIANS LIVE COMFORTABLY BECAUSE THEY ARE STRONG ENOUGH TO MAKE IT SO. NOW IF THAT COMFORT, THAT STRENGTH, COMES AT THE EXPENSE OF POWERLESS PEASANTS ...WELL, THEN SO BE IT.

NO! THAT WAY IS UNJUST! THE RYOTIANS ARE NO STRONGER...NO MORE DESERVING THAN WE ARE!
ALLOW ME TO DEMONSTRATE MY POINT. I HAVE SEEN YOU IN BATTLE. YOUR SWORDSMANSHIP IS SUPERB.
WHAMMMM!!
NOW DO YOU MEAN TO TELL ME THAT IF I TOSSED YOU ONTO THE BATTLEFIELD TOMORROW, YOU WOULD LAST MORE THAN A MINUTE? NO, YOU WOULD NOT BECAUSE YOU HAVE BEEN MADE WEAK.
AARRGGHH!!
SO YOU SEE, I HAVE NO SYMPATHY FOR THE REBEL CAUSE. I HAVE NO SYMPATHY FOR THE PLIGHT OF THE PATHETIC.... FOR THE WHINING OF THE WEAK.
...UFF... HERE...UGGH...BEAT ME AL...YOU WANT... I'LL TAKE IT ALL...BUT I WILL NOT TALK...

...SIGH... HOW DISAPPOINTING. I HAVE NEVER SEEN A MAN SO STRONG. HOWEVER, TO BE TRULY STRONG YOU MUST HAVE NO WEAKNESS...
...ARE YOU WITHOUT WEAKNESS MY FRIEND?
DAMN YOU! NO! LEAVE HER ALONE! SHE'S INNOCENT! SHE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS!
DAMN YOU, DAMN YOU! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO HER?!
"THAT YIN TO YOUR YANG....QUITE A SPECIAL WOMAN. SHE HEARD YOU HAD BEEN CAPTURED. SHE CAME TO US... BEGGED US TO GET YOU FREE. TOLD US YOU KNOW WHERE THE VILLAGE IS HIDDEN. SHE EVEN MADE ME PROMISE TO LET YOU GO IF YOU COOPERATE.
SHE IS IN GOOD HANDS. GIVE ME THE LOCATION AND SHE CAN BE IN YOUR HANDS.
NEVER!
COME NOW. I UNDERSTAND HOW YOU WOULD GIVE YOURSELF FOR THE CAUSE BUT SURELY YOU WOULD NOT SACRIFICE THE LOVE OF YOUR LIFE, WOULD YOU?

MAY THE GODS FORGIVE ME...DEEP IN THE VALLEY OF SHADOWS, THERE'S AN OPENING IN THE MOUNTAINS. SHAPED LIKE A CRESCENT. IT MARKS THE ENTRANCE TO A WINDING PATH THAT LEADS INTO THE HEART OF THE VALLEY. THERE IS WHERE YOU'LL FIND THE VILLAGE.
EXCELLENT.
ALRIGHT. YOU HAVE WHAT YOU WANT. LET US GO.
DON'T FEEL BAD MY FRIEND...YOU ARE MERELY THE VICTIM OF YOUR WEAKNESS...
...LOVE CAN MAKE A PERSON STRONG BUT MORE OFTEN IT MAKES THAT PERSON VERY, VERY WEAK...
...AND AS WE LEARNED FROM THE WOUNDED DRAGON...

...THE WEAK ULTIMATELY CAN DO NOTHING BUT DIE.
NNOOOOOOOO!!! NOOOOOO!! YOU BASTARD!!
YOU BAST--!!

ALERT MY BATTALION. WE DEPART FOR THE VALLEY OF SHADOWS IMMEDIATELY.
CONTINUED IN WARLANDS: AGE OF ICE #1/2!

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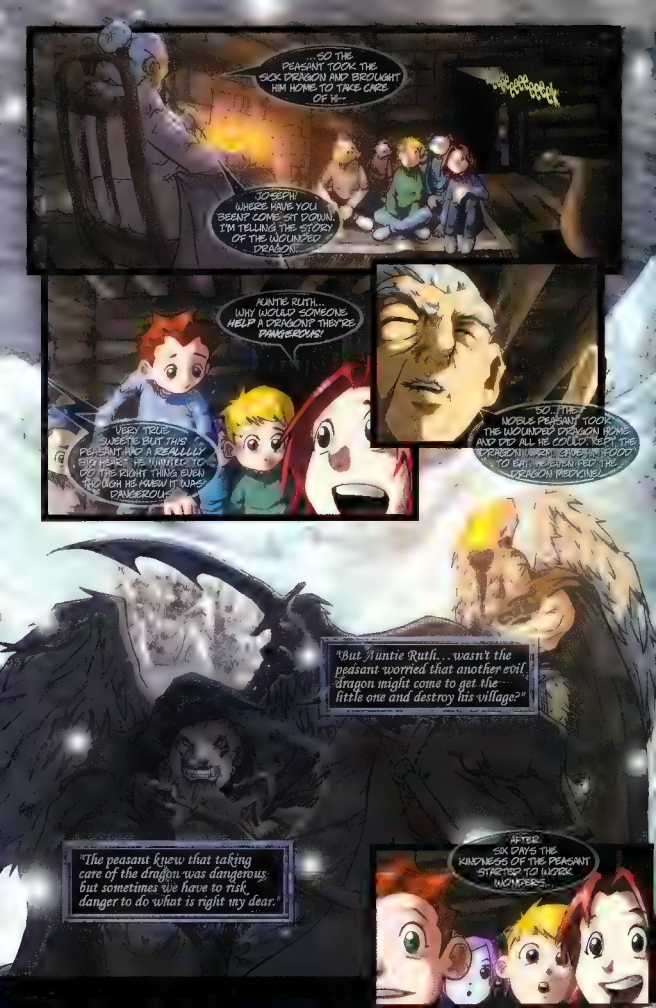
The Northern Mountains of Warlands.
Site of the seldom-traveled Valley of Shadows.
CLAW
CLAW
Just before midnight.
CLAW
CLAW
CLAW

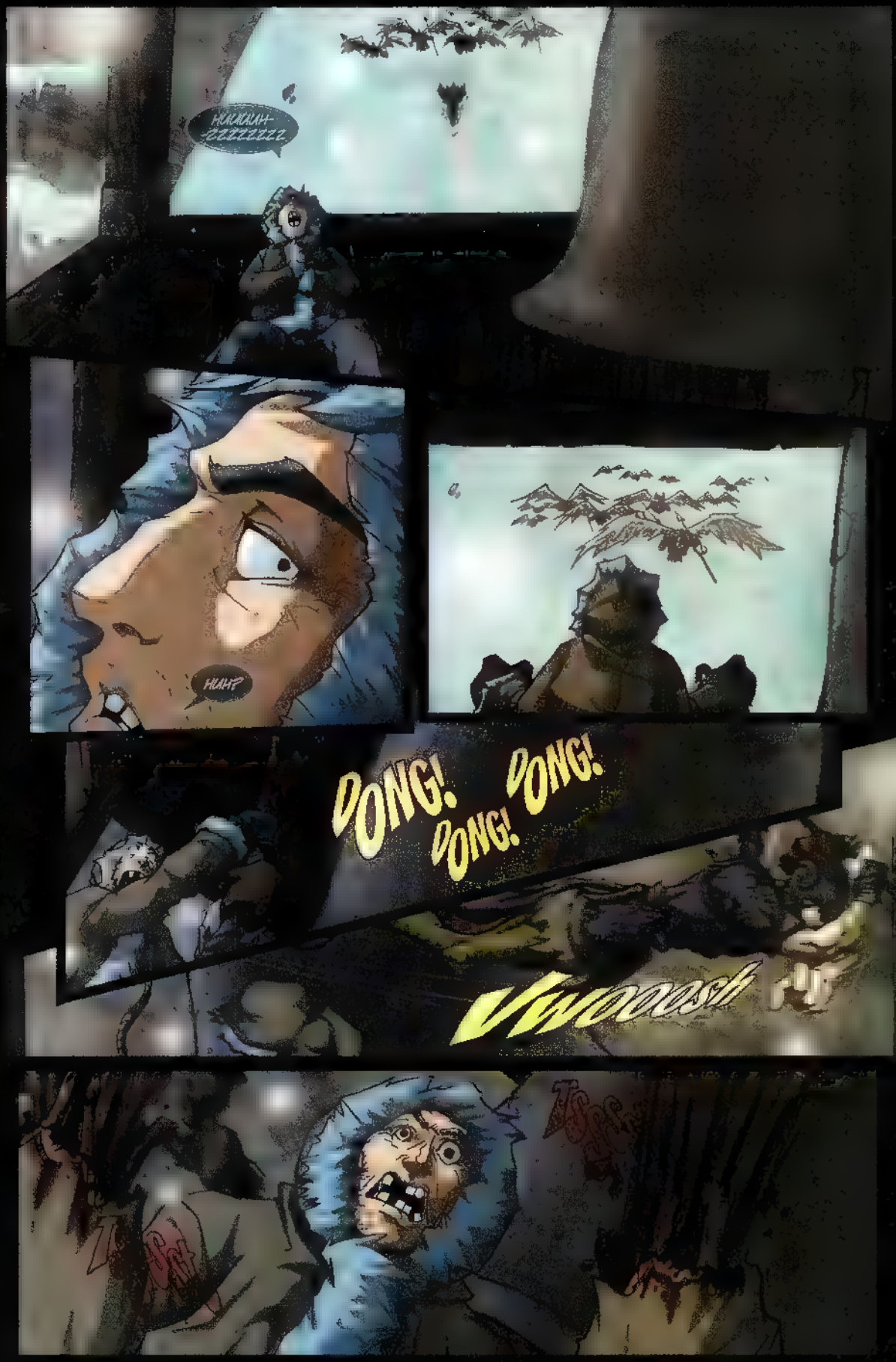
CLANG!
CLANG!
CLANG!
C'MON MEN! PICK UP THE PACE! WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME LEFT FOR THIS BATCH.
CLANG!
CLANG!
TSSS!
ONE OF OUR REBEL SQUADS IS PLANNING TO ATTACK A RYOTAN MILITARY BASE JUST SOUTH OF HERE...
THE MEN [illegible] SUNRISE. SO HURRY.

BEEEP!
YOU KNOW YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO STAY AWAY FROM THE HOUSE, JOSEPH. IT'S DANGEROUS!
NO, MA... I WASN'T DOIN' NOTHIN' WRONG. I WAS JUST HAVIN' A LOOK. THAT'S ALL.
AND BESIDES, WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUTSIDE AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT ANYWAY? GET BACK TO AUNTIE RUTH'S HOUSE WITH THE OTHER CHILDREN. RIGHT NOW, YOUNG MAN!
ALRIGHT, MA... ALRIGHT.
SAY, MA... WHEN I GROW UP DO YOU THINK I CAN JOIN THE REBEL ARMIES AND BAD GUY-ET THOSE LOOK AWESOME!
LISTEN YOU MONKEY. BY THE TIME YOU GROW UP THERE WON'T BE A WAR TO FIGHT. OUR BOYS ARE GOING TO WIN THE ROYTANS SOON ENOUGH.
I LOVE YOU, SON, BUT RUTH IS RIGHT. YOU DON'T WANT TO BE IN A WAR. YOU'RE TOO SWEET TO SEE THOSE KINDS OF THINGS. DO YOU?
AW NOW, THAT AUNTIE RUTH'S STORIES? I FORGOT, I'VE GOTTA GO!
I HATE THAT I'M LEAVING YOU WITH THOSE WEAPONS AND SONGS, THOUGH.
AND BESIDES, DO YOU REALLY THINK I'D LET YOU GO OFF TO WAR AND FIGHT? NO WAY! YOU'RE MY LITTLE BOY! I'M NOT GOING TO LET ANYTHING HURT YOU.
GEEZ MA... WHY YOU GOTTA BE SO CHEEZY, HUH?


...SO THE PEASANT TOOK THE SICK DRAGON AND BROUGHT HIM HOME TO TAKE CARE OF IT...
THE GOOD PEASANT
JOSEPH! WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? COME SIT DOWN. I'M TELLING THE STORY OF THE WOUNDED DRAGON!
AUNTIE RUTH... WHY WOULD SOMEONE HELP A DRAGON? THEY'RE DANGEROUS!
VERY TRUE, SWEETIE BUT THIS PEASANT HAD A REALLY BIG HEART. HE WANTED TO DO THE RIGHT THING EVEN THOUGH HE KNEW IT WAS DANGEROUS...
SO...THE NOBLE PEASANT TOOK THE WOUNDED DRAGON HOME AND DID ALL HE COULD. KEPT THE DRAGON WARM, GAVE HIM FOOD TO EAT, AND EVEN FED THE DRAGON MEDICINE!
"But Auntie Ruth... wasn't the peasant worried that another evil dragon might come to get the little one and destroy his village?"
"The peasant knew that taking care of the dragon was dangerous but sometimes we have to risk danger to do what is right my dear."
AFTER SIX DAYS THE KINDNESS OF THE PEASANT STARTED TO WORK WONDERS...

"...the dragon actually started to get better!"
SO! THE DRAGON MUST HAVE BEEN HAPPY FOR WHAT THAT GUY DID. HE SAVED YOU!
YES... THIS IS WHAT THE NOBLE PEASANT THOUGHT AS WELL...
"...but he was soon to be in for quite a shock."

SEEING THAT THE DRAGON WAS WELL AGAIN, THE PEASANT OPENED HIS MOUTH TO SHOUT OUT WITH GLEE...
"...but before he could the dragon spit out a flame so big it burned the peasant and his house!"
SEE! I KNEW IT! I KNEW THE DRAGON WAS TROUBLE!
SO, MY DEARS...WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS STORY?
DON'T MESS WITH DRAGONS!
NO JOSEPH, THE TRUE LESSON IS THAT NO MATTER HOW BIG YOUR HEART, NO MATTER HOW GOOD YOUR INTENTIONS, EVEN IF YOU'RE DOING THE RIGHT THING...
"...some people in this world are just evil."


HUUUUH-
-ZZZZZZZZ
HUH?
DONG! DONG! DONG!
VWOOOSH

ALRIGHT...
...C'MON YOU
WHUMP!

I'M S-SCARED AUNT'E RUTH! I'M S-SCARED ...W-WHO A-ARE THESE PEOPLE?

BAD PEOPLE, MY CHILDREN. *VERY BAD PEOPLE.* PEOPLE WHO DON'T CARE ABOUT RIGHT OR WRONG.

IS IT...IS THE DRAGON C-COMING FOR US?

B-DOOM!

Y-YES MY DEAR...

B-DOOM!

CRAAACK

WHUMP!

...I FEAR YOU MAY BE RIGHT...

PLEASE... PLEASE...I BEG YOU... THEY ARE J-JUST CHILDREN... THEY *CANNOT* HARM YOU... P-PLEASE...THEY'RE *JUST* CH-CHILDREN...

NO. THEY'RE NOT...

...THEY'RE *PEASANTS.*

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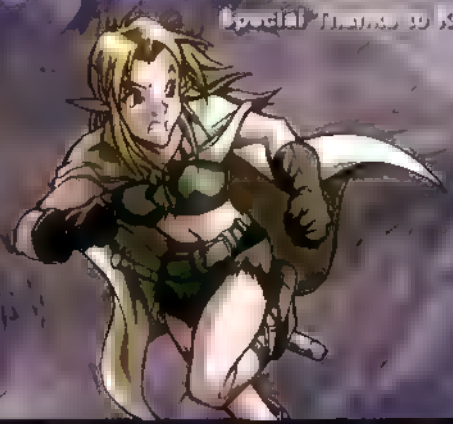

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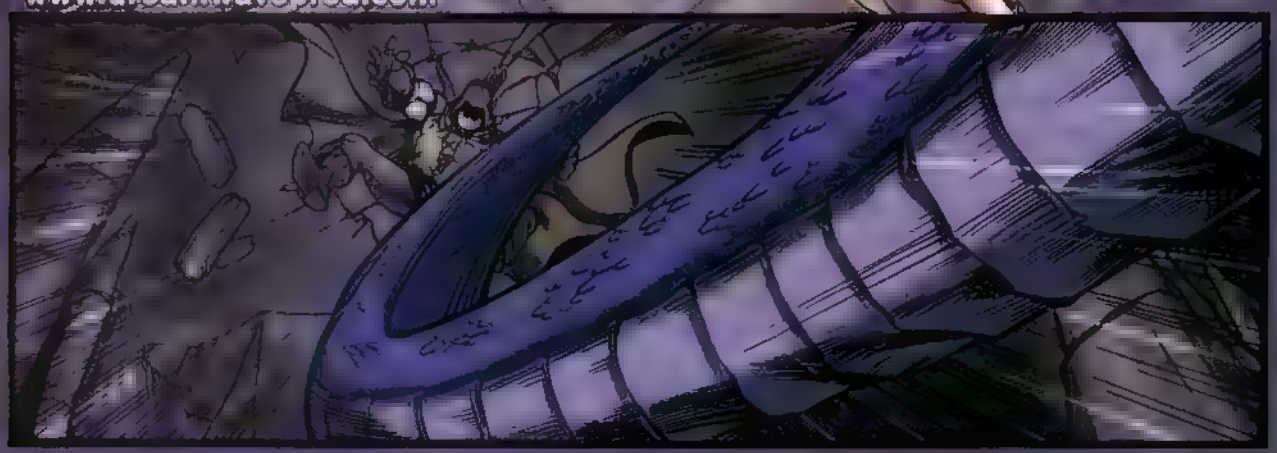

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WHAT HAVE YOU DONE ARAGION???
MERELY ENLISTED THE AID OF SOME POWERFUL ALLIES...
YOU'RE A MADMAN ARAGON! THEY'D SOONER RIP YOUR THROAT OUT THAN HOLD UP THEIR END OF A BARGAIN! AND IF THEY GET FREE...
YOU'VE KNOWN ALL ALONG THEY HAD THE POWER TO ACCOMPLISH OUR GOALS. DON'T CRY TO ME IF YOU'VE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO SUMMON UP THE COURAGE TO FACE THEM!
YOU ARE THREE WEEKS EARLY, HUMAN. AND THERE ARE MORE HUMANS HERE THAN JUST YOU AND THE MAGE.

CALL YOURSELF ASTAROTH! EVERYTHING GOES ACCORDING TO PLAN. MASTER ZEPH MERELY GRACED ME WITH HIS PRESENCE EARLIER [illegible] ANTICIPATED.

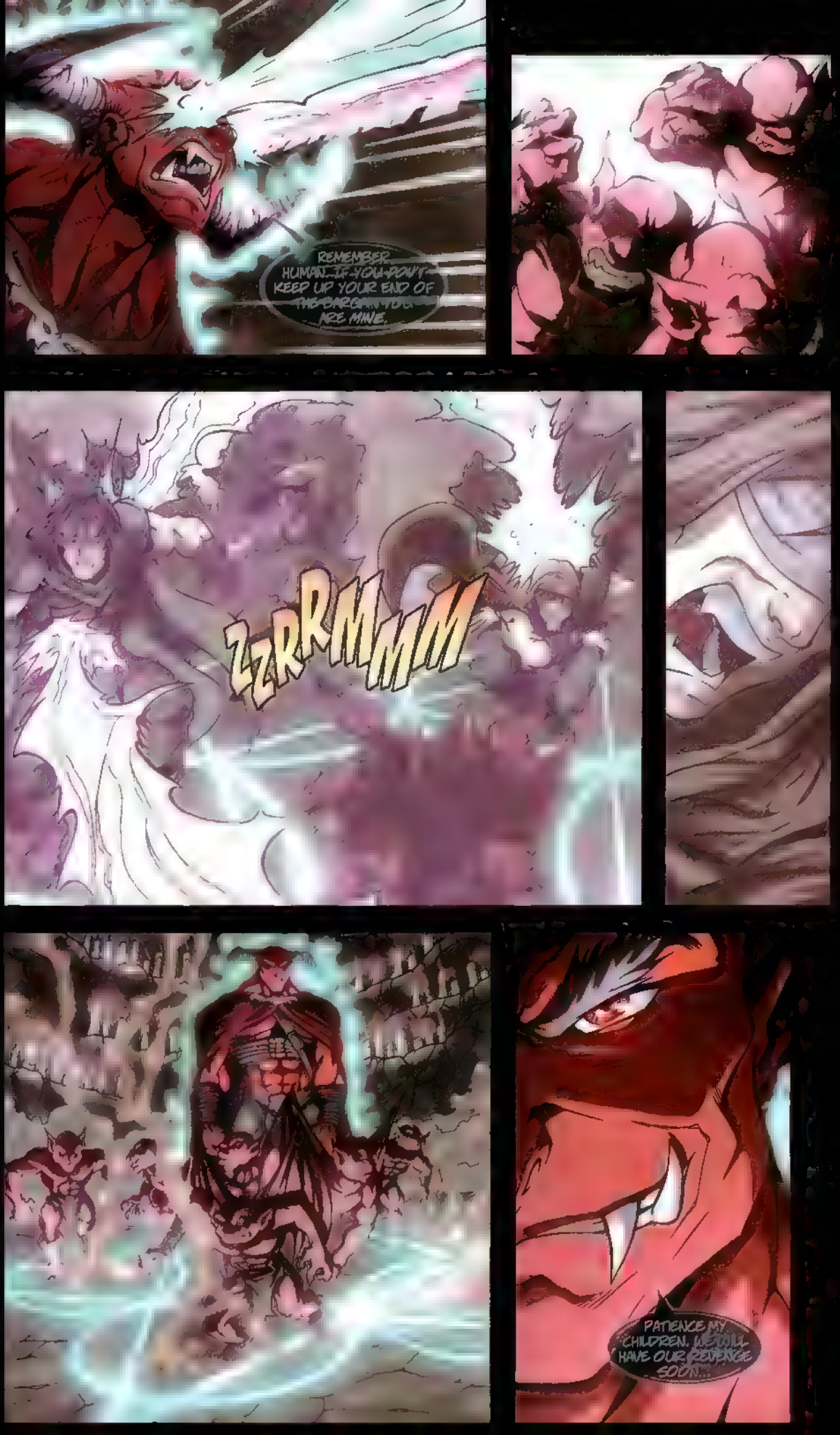
WHAT PLAN???

ZZZZT!

THE GEM USED TO CONTROL SHIM'TAR IS THE KEY. NOT EVEN THE DATARANS UNDERSTOOD IT'S [illegible]

AND YOU REALLY THINK THESE DEMONS ARE GOING TO HELP YOU FIND IT, AND JUST GIVE IT TO YOU ONCE THEY DO? BETTER THE WORLD FREEZE THEN HAVE THE GEM FALL INTO THEIR HANDS!

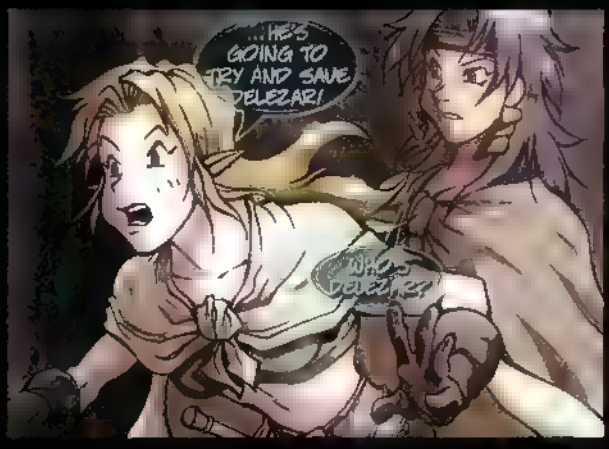
AH, BUT I ALREADY KNOW EXACTLY WHERE TO FIND IT AND REST ASSURED I PLAN ON BEING THE FIRST ONE TO LAY MY HANDS ON IT.
DON'T DO IT, ARAGON. IF YOU RELEASE THEM, YOU'LL NEVER REASSERT YOUR CONTROL OVER THEM!
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS. I DON'T NEED TO RELEASE THEM.
I TOLD YOU I ALREADY KNOW WHERE TO FIND IT.
VVMMM
1ST ROTH WE'RE READY!
LOOK OUT!

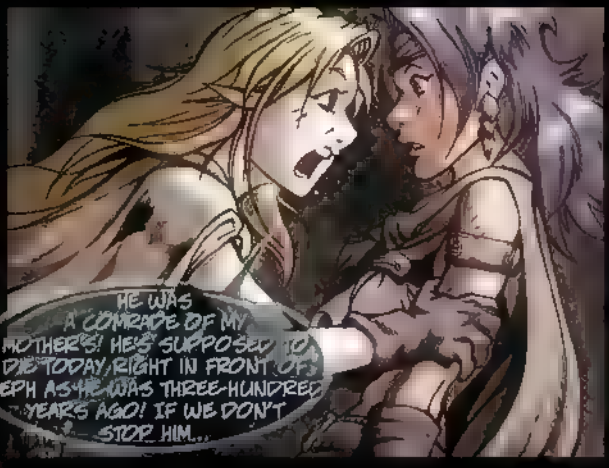

REMEMBER HUMAN... IF YOU DON'T KEEP UP YOUR END OF THE BARGAIN, YOU ARE MINE.
ZZRRMMM
PATIENCE MY CHILDREN. WE WILL HAVE OUR REVENGE SOON...

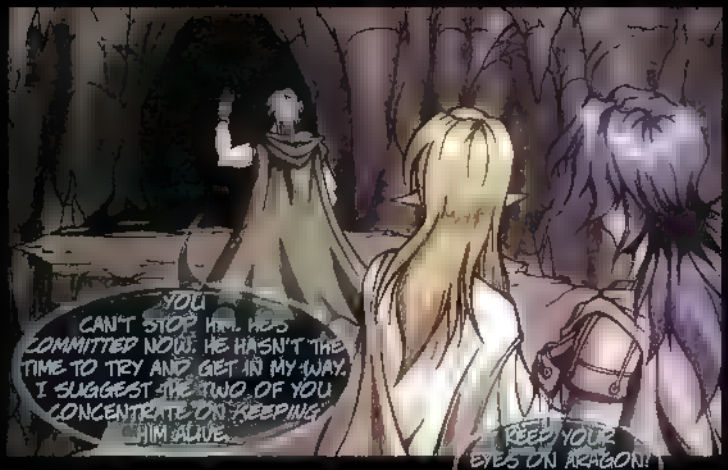
Sometime...
What have you done?!?
Have a little faith Zeph. I am doing exactly as I promised. I am going to save our world.
I told you, I know exactly where to find the gem. Three hundred years ago you witnessed the battle for the Darklyte armor. The last time it was seen by human eyes. What better place to find it?
What are you talking about? Time travel isn't possible!
Come now, you and I both know that traveling through time is as simple a matter as traveling between dimensions. It merely takes more power.
With the energy that Astaroth is supplying us, I would have had more than enough energy to open the portal. But to channel it into my spell, I needed mastery of magik that only you and I possess.
Stop this, Aragon!!! We could destroy the entire universe if we're not careful! Astaroth must be pouring the energy of the entire Astral plane into your spell! In a few moments it will shatter, and they'll be set loose!
That will be all the time I need.

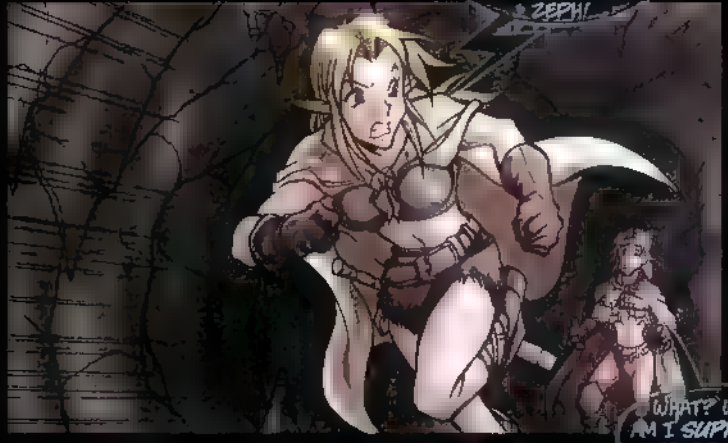
WHOOM
WOOSH
WHAT'S HAPPENED? HOW DID WE GET HERE?
I SUGGEST YOU KEEP YOUR VOICES DOWN. ECHNRO WAS NOTORIOUSLY UNWELCOMING OF GUESTS.
SANKOT? WHERE ARE WE???
I KNOW THIS PLACE... THIS IS THE TUNNEL THAT LEAD TO THE SANCTUARY OF THE DARKLYTE ARMOR!
HE'S TAKEN US INTO THE PAST...
YOU'RE GOING TO TRY TO STEAL THE GEM FROM VARDEMIS! YOU'RE GOING TO CHANGE HISTORY!
I'M MERELY GOING TO PICK IT UP AFTER HE DROPS IT. THE RECORDS OF THIS DAY'S EVENTS WERE METICULOUSLY RECORDED. I'VE BEEN STUDYING THEM FOR THE LAST 200 YEARS. I KNOW EXACTLY WHEN TO MAKE MY MOVE...
DELEZAR... I STILL HAVE TIME...

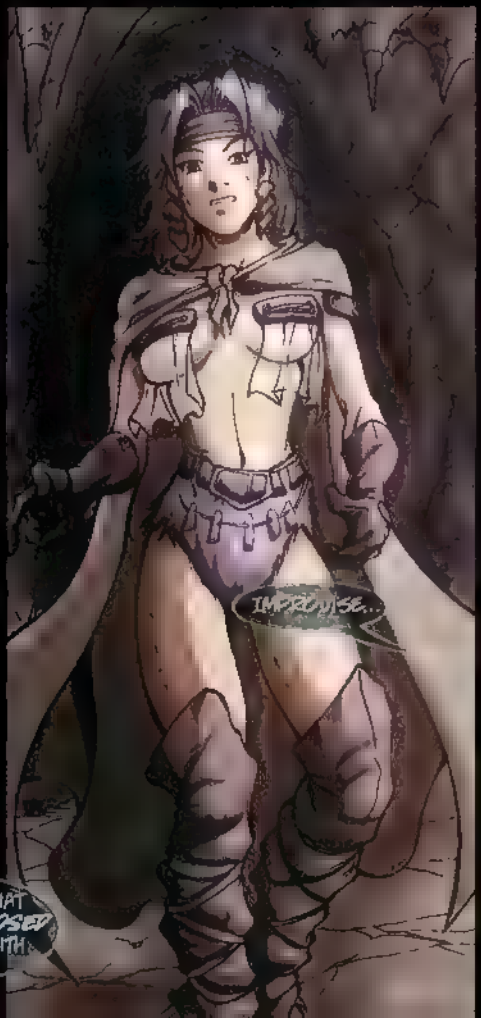
IT'S TOO LATE ZEPH!!! I KNEW YOU WOULD TRY THIS SO I MADE SURE YOU WOULDN'T HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO SAVE HIM!
IF YOU GET YOURSELF KILLED THE SPELL WILL COLLAPSE! DON'T RISK DISRUPTING THE TIMELINE!


...HE'S GOING TO TRY AND SAVE DELEZAR!
WHO'S DELEZAR?


HE WAS A COMRADE OF MY MOTHER'S! HE'S SUPPOSED TO DIE TODAY, RIGHT IN FRONT OF ZEPH AS HE WAS THREE-HUNDRED YEARS AGO! IF WE DON'T STOP HIM...


YOU CAN'T STOP HIM. HE'S COMMITTED NOW. HE HASN'T THE TIME TO TRY AND GET IN MY WAY. I SUGGEST THE TWO OF YOU CONCENTRATE ON KEEPING HIM ALIVE.
KEEP YOUR EYES ON ARAGON! I'M GOING AFTER ZEPH!


WHAT? WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO WITH HIM?


IMPROVISE...

Meanwhile, deeper inside the caves...
So long ago... I was just a boy... but now I've come back...
STAND ASIDE
I can still save him...
I don't have time for this... the tunnel is going to start to collapse any minute...
SLUSH

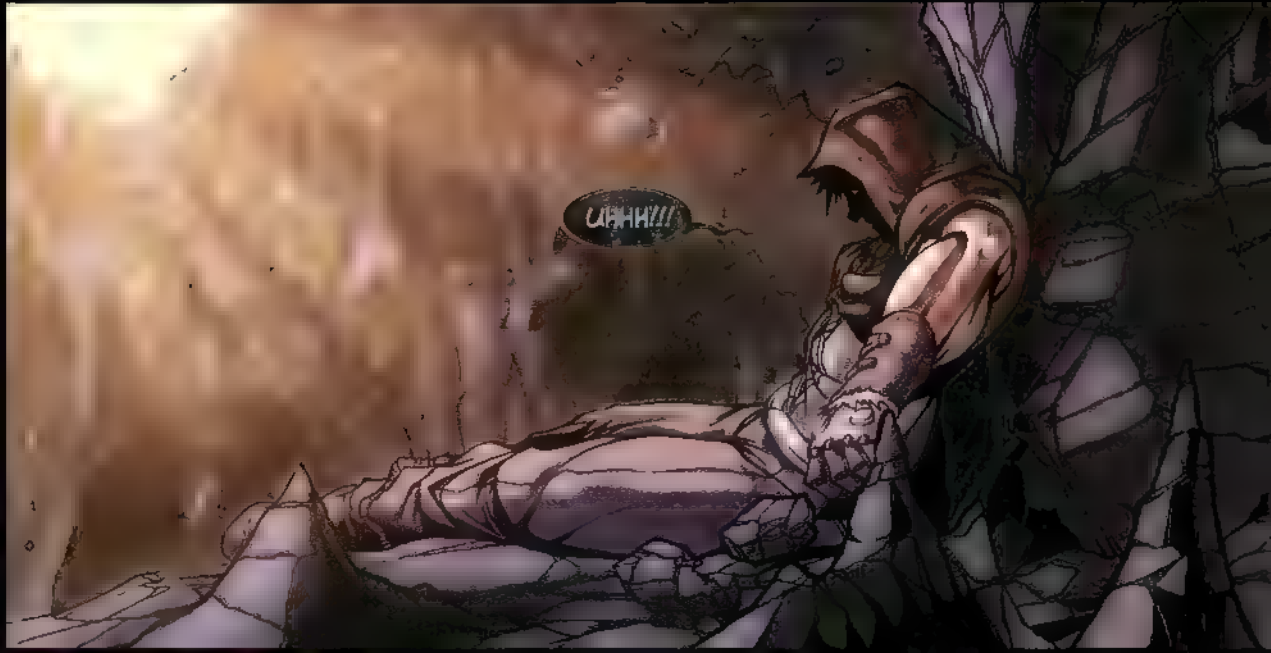
SKLURCH
ZEPH! STOP THIS!
SHAASSH
GLGGGG... DELEZAR!!!!!

THIS IS NOT THE ANSWER! HE'S GONE!
OUT OF MY WAY!!!
ZEPH! WAIT!

by
MATEO
GUERRERO
&
AURE
2022

Delezar!!
KKRRRAAK
I'm running out of time.
THWACK

KKRRSSHH
KKRRSSHH

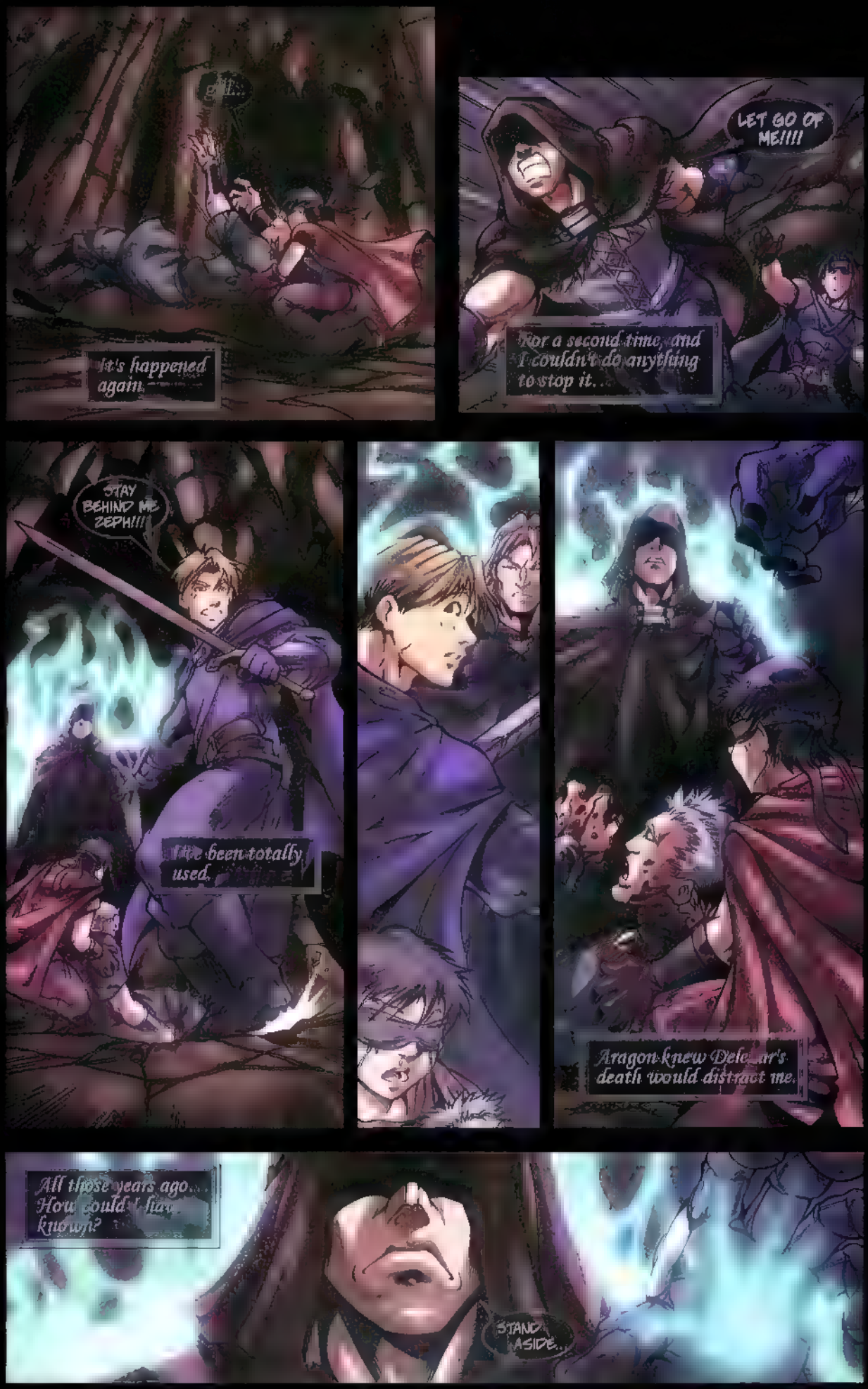

UHHH!!!

ZEPH!!!
WE HAVE TO GET ACROSS!
COME ON, WE HAVE TO FIND ANOTHER WAY ACROSS!
Meanwhile...
Stubborn fool. If he interferes and changes something in our timeline, he'll ruin everything.

I may have to kill him after all.
But can I risk becoming trapped here if Zeph's death causes my spell to collapse?
It's all happening too fast!!!

CLANK
CLANK
CLANK
WHAK!
I'M AFRAID I CAN'T LET YOU INTERFERE.
WE HAVE WHAT WE CAME FOR, ZEPH. ALL WE CAN DO NOW IS WAIT AND ALLOW THE SPELL TO RETURN US TO OUR OWN TIME.
NO! LET GO OF ME!

THWOOSH
SKKLURCH!
NO!
CONSIDER YOURSELF FORTUNATE. YOUR DEATH WILL BE EASY COMPARED TO THE ONE I WILL GIVE YOUR COMPANIONS.


gll...
It's happened again.
LET GO OF ME!!!!
For a second time, and I couldn't do anything to stop it...
STAY BEHIND ME ZEPH!!!
I've been totally used.
Aragon knew Dele...rr's death would distract me.
All those years ago... How could I have known?
STAND ASIDE...

...that I was really watching myself...
SHH-THOOM
watching myself attack Vardemis. Three hundred years too late.
STAY HERE. REVENGE WILL COME SOON YOUNG LAD...
There is nothing I can do to help him...
But I can set things right...
A stupid thing to say, strange.. I remember it was a small comfort...

STAY BACK ZEPH. YOU'RE NOT THINKING CLEARLY...YOU KNEW AS WELL AS I DID THAT INTERFERING WITH THIS TIME WOULD HAVE BEEN A DISASTER...
ON THE CONTRARY ARAGON... I'M THINKING PERFECTLY CLEARLY. FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE WE BEGAN THIS.
YOUR PLAN WORKED WELL.
BUT NOW YOUR DISTRACTION
STOPPING THE ADVANCE OF ICE OR NOT, YOUR PLAN IS TOO DANGEROUS TO BE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE.

YOU TELL ME I DON'T HAVE THE COURAGE TO DO WHAT'S NECESSARY TO SAVE MY WORLD!
MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT. I WOULD HAVE NEVER CHOSEN TO ALLY MYSELF WITH THE DEMONS TO ACHIEVE MY GOAL...
THEIR CURE IS WORSE THAN OUR SICKNESS. AND NO MATTER WHAT POWER YOU THINK YOU WIELD, THEY'RE GOING TO BETRAY YOU IN THE END. BUT YOU DON'T NEED TO WORRY ABOUT THEM KILLING YOU...
BECAUSE I'M GOING TO DO IT FOR THEM.
TO BE CONTINUED...

DW
WARLANDS
AGE OF ICE
7
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DREAMWAVE PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

WARLANDS™

AGE OF ICE

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Inks	Aure Jimenez
Colors	Yvonne Poon
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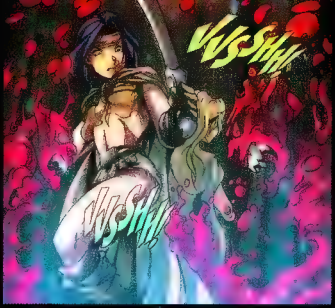
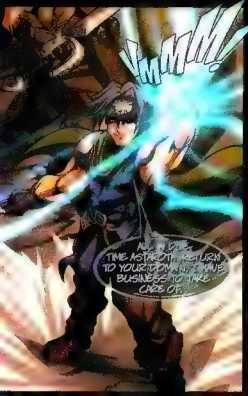
Printed in Canada.

... SEND YOUR DEMONS BACK TO THE ABYSS SO WE CAN GET THIS OVER WITH.
YOU'RE A FOOL, BOY. FOR YOUR BATTLE-LUST, YOU'VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR A WAY TO SAVE THIS WORLD. AND NOW, WHEN I OFFER IT TO YOU FREELY, BUT YOU'D RATHER KILL ME THAN EVEN ENTERTAIN THE POSSIBILITY THAT I MIGHT BE RIGHT.
EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE SO FAR HAS BEEN THE ACTIONS OF A MAD MAN ARAGON. THERE ARE POWERS THAT NOT EVEN YOU OR I WERE MEANT TO WIELD, TRAFFICKING WITH DEMONS? TIME TRAVEL?
YOU'VE LOST YOUR MIND ARAGON. NOW ALL THAT REMAINS IS TO KILL THE BODY.....
VERY WELL THEN...

THIS CHANGES NOTHING THEN. THE WORLD WILL STILL BE REBORN, YOU JUST WON'T BE AROUND TO SEE IT.
WISHH
WISHH

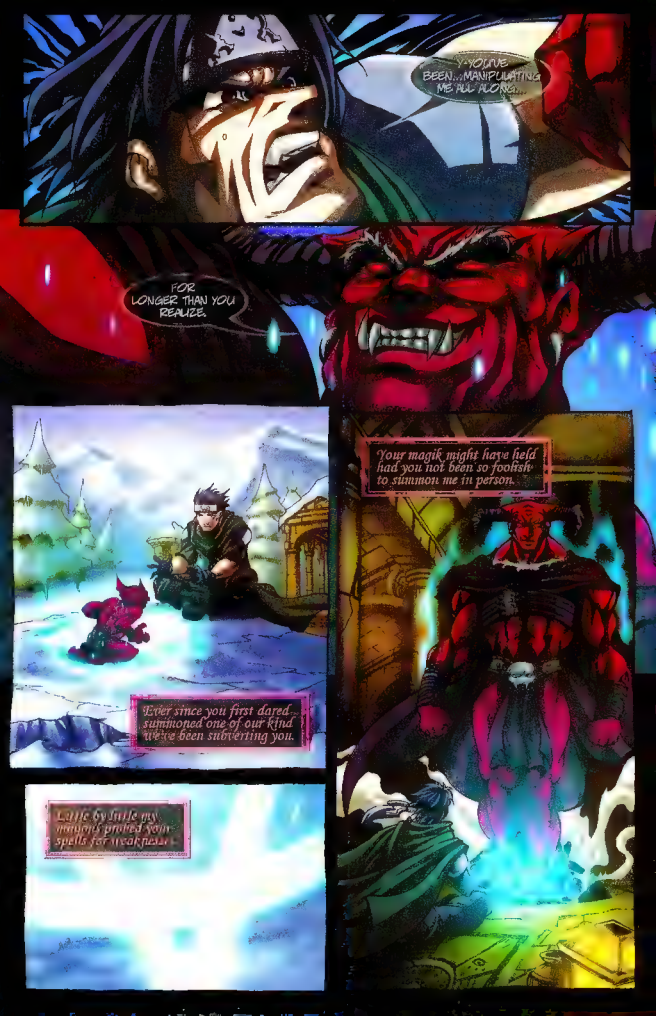

WISHH
WISHH

YOU HAVE NOT FULFILLED YOUR END OF THE BARGAIN.


AND SO THE TIME ASTAROTH RETURN TO YOUR DOMAIN. I HAVE BUSINESS TO TAKE CARE OF.

I THINK NOT.

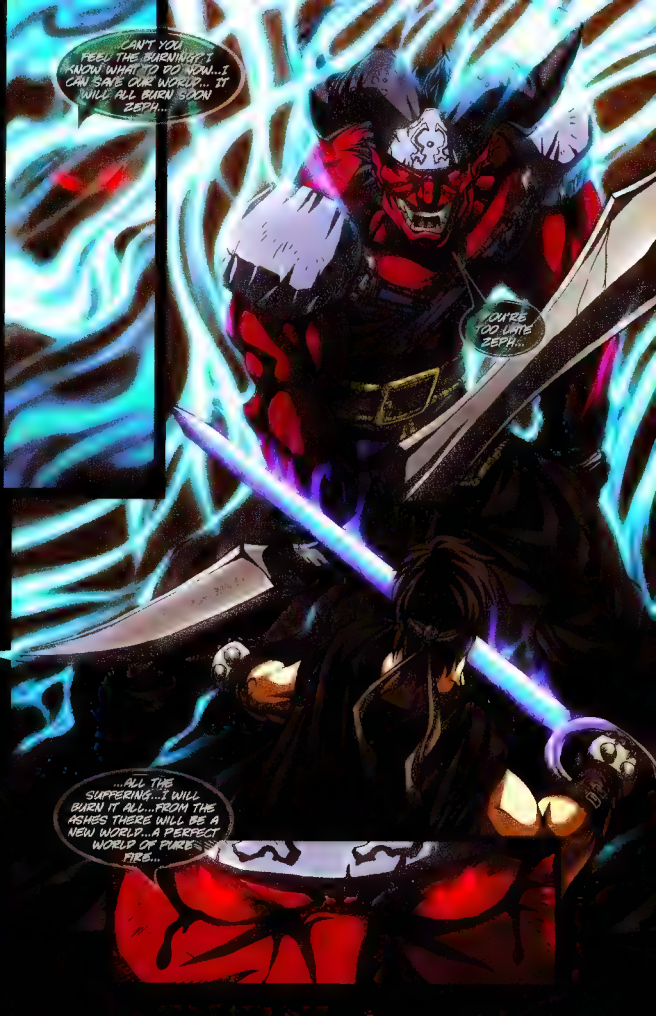
DID YOU TRULY THINK SUCH A PITIFUL WARDING CIRCLE COULD CONTROL A DEMON LORD? THE CREATURES OF THE ABYSS ARE NOT TOYS FOR YOU TO PLAY WITH AND DISCARD.
ARRRGGGH...
ALL THIS TIME YOU'VE BELIEVED YOU WERE ACTING OF YOUR OWN ACCORD...
KRRZZZ!


Y-YOU'VE BEEN...MANIPULATING ME ALL ALONG...
FOR LONGER THAN YOU REALIZE.
Ever since you first dared summoned one of our kind we've been subverting you.
Little by little my minions probed your spells for weakness.
Your magik might have held had you not been so foolish to summon me in person.

Did you really think such an elaborate plan could come from your own puny imagination?
The location of the gem... the calculations necessary for the time travel...
ALL THAT KNOWLEDGE CAME FROM ME, SURREPTITIOUSLY PLACED IN YOUR MIND SO THAT YOU WOULD THINK.
DRAGON!
CLOSE THE SPELL! CLOSE IT BEFORE ASTAROTH CAN GAIN A FOOTHOLD INTO OUR WORLD!
I'M TRYING...
YOU'RE TOO LATE, HUMAN...

I ALREADY HAVE MY FOOTHOLD.
ZZHMMM!
Even as Zeph realizes his mistake, Aragon closes his summoning spell, and the last of the demons are returned to their homes in the abyss.
ZZHMMM!
All of them except Astaroth...
...Who's found a home of a completely different sort...

AAAARRRGGGH!!!
THEDIEBURNING...
KILLYOUALL...
CANTCONTROL...
LOSINGCONTROL
YESKILLMEBEFORE
YOUAREMINE!
ARAGON!
AAARGGGH!
KRRZZKKK!!

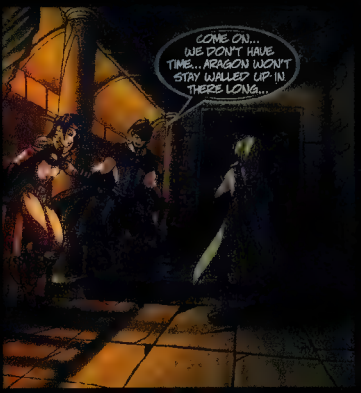

...CAN'T YOU FEEL THE BURNING? I KNOW WHAT TO DO NOW...I CAN SAVE OUR WORLD... IT WILL ALL BURN SOON ZEPH...
YOU'RE TOO LATE ZEPH...
...ALL THE SUFFERING...I WILL BURN IT ALL...FROM THE ASHES THERE WILL BE A NEW WORLD...A PERFECT WORLD OF PURE FIRE...

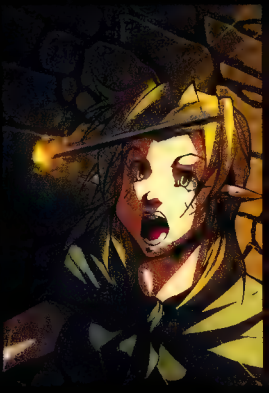
HE'S GONE COMPLETELY MAD...
SOMETHING'S HAPPENING!
ARAGORN'S SPELL IS STILL PARTIALLY CONTAINING ASTAROTH INSIDE THIS CHAMBER. HE'S GOT TO DESTROY THE RUNES BEFORE HE CAN ESCAPE...
WE HAVE TO STOP HIM!
IT'S TOO LATE FOR THAT! IN A FEW MOMENTS, THIS ENTIRE CHAMBER IS GOING TO BE NOTHING BUT MOLTEN ROCK!
THWOOM!
WE CAN'T JUST LEAVE!
THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT WE'RE GOING TO DO! WE CAN'T FIGHT HIM HERE... HE'S IMMUNE TO FIRE NOW... AND GOD KNOWS WHAT ELSE...
IT WILL TAKE AN ARMY TO STOP HIM NOW. AND I KNOW JUST WHERE TO FIND ONE...

...WE'VE BEEN UNABLE TO LOCATE THEM AS OF YET CAPTAIN...IT APPEARS THE SORCERER MORGON COMMISSIONED QUITE AN INTRICATE NETWORK OF TUNNELS (WHILE HE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE BUILDING US A WEAPON. IT MAY BE THAT HE HAS ALREADY ESCAPED THROUGH ONE OF THE UNDERGROUND TRIBUTARIES.
FOR YOUR SAKE, HOPE THAT HE HASN'T. THE EMPRESS WILL NOT TOLERATE FAILURE.
OF COURSE CAPTAIN. WE'LL FIND THEM, MY MEN AND I ONLY NEED A LITTLE MORE TIME. THESE ARE NOT SIMPLE ESCAPED SLAVES WE'RE DEALING WITH. THESE ARE CUNNING HUMANS, AND THEY'RE NOT ABOUT TO JUST RUN UP AND PRESENT...
OUT OF THE WAY!
THEMSELVES...?

STOP THEM!
UHH...
TSSSS!!
FWWSSSHH!
FWWSSSHH!

COME ON! WE GAVE TO GET TO HIGHER GROUND!
FSSS!

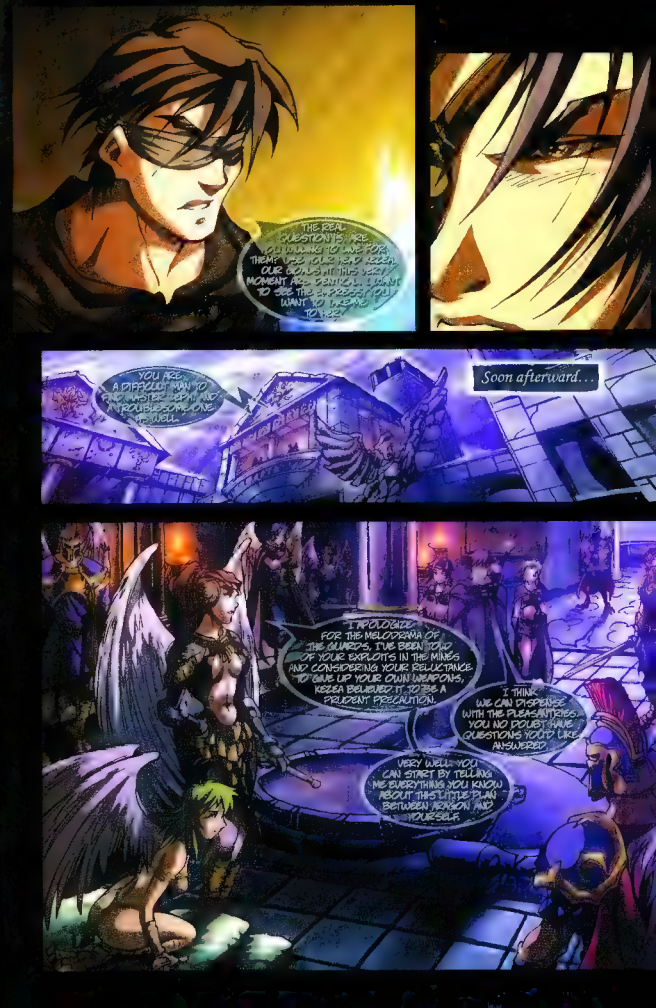

COME ON... WE DON'T HAVE TIME... ARAGON WON'T STAY WALLED UP IN THERE LONG...



THROW DOWN YOUR WEAPONS. THE EMPRESS WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A WORD WITH YOU SORCERER.

GOOD. YOU SURVIVED. YOU CAN TAKE ME TO SEE THE EMPRESS.
YOU'RE IN NO POSITION TO MAKE DEMANDS SORCERER.

AND YOU ARE IN NO POSITION TO REFUSE MY REQUEST.
VVVZMMM!
DO YOU REALLY THINK YOUR FEEBLE MAGIC IS ENOUGH TO DEFEAT US ALL?
A SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNT OF YOUR MEN ARE ALREADY DEAD KEZEA. AS WE SPEAK, A DEMON THAT CAN NO LONGER BE TRAPPED IN THE ABYSS GATHERS IT'S STRENGTH IN THE NEXT CHAMBER. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, A BETTER QUESTION MIGHT BE: DO YOU FEEL LIKE BEING A LEADER TODAY? OR A MARTYR?
I AM NOT AFRAID TO DIE FOR MY PEOPLE HUMAN.



THE REAL QUESTION IS, ARE YOU WILLING TO LIVE FOR THEM? USE YOUR HEAD KEZEA. OUR GOALS, IT THIS VERY MOMENT ARE DENTICAL. I WANT TO SEE THE EMPRESS, YOU WANT TO LIKE ME TO HER.

YOU ARE A DIFFICULT MAN TO FIND MASTER LEPH AND A TROUBLESOME ONE IS WELL.

Soon afterward...

I APOLOGIZE FOR THE MELODRAMA OF THE GUARDS, I'VE BEEN TOLD OF YOUR EXPLOITS IN THE MINES AND CONSIDERING YOUR RELUCTANCE TO GIVE UP YOUR OWN WEAPONS, KEZEA BELIEVED IT TO BE A PRUDENT PRECAUTION.

I THINK WE CAN DISPENSE WITH THE PLEASANTRIES. YOU NO DOUBT HAVE QUESTIONS YOU'D LIKE ANSWERED.

VERY WELL. YOU CAN START BY TELLING ME EVERYTHING YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS LITTLE PLAN BETWEEN ARAGON AND YOURSELF.

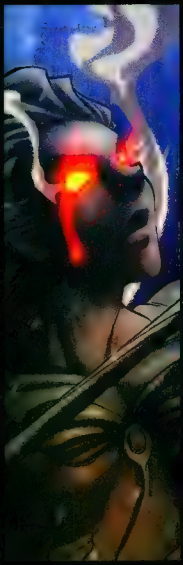
WE AREN'T WORKING TOGETHER ANYMORE ZERAVA.
REALLY? THERE ARE A GREAT MANY PEOPLE THAT WOULD DISAGREE WITH YOU. A LITTLE LESS OF THEM AS OF LATE HOWEVER, AS YOU'VE BEEN HARD AT WORK KILLING THEM. I CAUTION YOU TO CHOOSE YOUR NEXT WORDS CAREFULLY.
MY SOLDIERS ARE ADVERSE TO SOMEONE MURDERING THEIR OWN PEOPLE.
AS AM I.
YOU WANTED TO DISPENSE WITH THE PLEASANTRIES? VERY WELL. I WILL POSE YOU A DIFFERENT QUESTION: GIVE ME A REASON NOT TO EXECUTE YOU AND YOUR COMPANIONS WHERE YOU STAND?

* See Warlords Volume 1 for Details.

Not just himself. If he succeeds, the entire barrier separating our two planes of existence will cease to exist. The material plane and the astral plane will become one. No one can banish a demon if there's no place to banish it to.
You are speaking of hell on earth.
And if we don't act fast no one will be able to stop it. The demon is still contained inside Aragon's summoning spell. The entire network of tunnels he created was designed to do so.
the lava...he has to melt the summoning runes before he can escape...
THAT DOESN'T GIVE US MUCH TIME!

THAT'S ALL WELL AND GOOD... BUT ARAGON IS A DEMON LORD NOW. SO THE QUESTION IS: HOW DO WE STOP HIM?
THE DEMON LORD IS USING ARAGON'S BODY TO STAY IN OUR WORLD. OUTSIDE OF THE SUMMONING CIRCLE, KILL THE BODY, AND THE DEMON WILL RETURN TO ITS OWN REALM, TAKING THAT, DESTROYING THE GEM, ITSELF...
YOU TELL A VERY INTERESTING STORY, AND I'M SURE, LIKE ANY GOOD LIE, IT CONTAINS SOME ELEMENTS OF TRUTH. BUT I'M AFRAID I CAN'T PUT MYSELF IN A POSITION TO TRUST YOU...
AGREE THAT ARAGON MUST BE STOPPED, BUT I'M STILL NOT CONVINCED WHOSE SIDE YOU AND YOUR COMPANIONS HAVE CHOSEN...
THEY'VE CHOSEN THE BROWN SIDE, OBVIOUSLY.

THEY'VE NO MORE LOVE FOR ARAGON THEN THEY HAVE FOR YOU, OF THAT, I'D ASSURE YOU.
I BETRAYED NO ONE. YOU PAID ME TO BRING YOU THE HUMAN. I DID. MY CONTRACT ENDED THERE.
YOU ARE FOOLISH TO COME HERE AFTER YOU BETRAYED US JARDIS!
ARAGON EMPLOYED ME FOR A TIME, HOWEVER I MAY HAVE TROUBLE COLLECTING MY PAYMENT IF WHAT THE HUMAN SAYS IS TRUE. CARE TO OFFER ME ANOTHER JOB?
HIGHNESS! SOMETHING IS HAPPENING IN THE COURTYARD!



KKRR-BOOOM!

WHOOSH!

KRRRSSHHH!!
DO YOU BELIEVE ME NOW?
THANKS!! MATEO Lopez + AURE.

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writer... Adrian Tsang
pencils... Mateo Guerrero
inks... Aure Jimenez
colors... Stuart Ng and Sussam Lui

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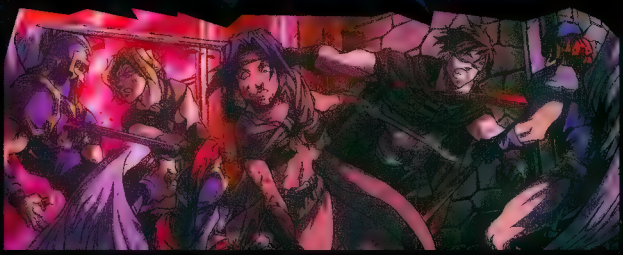

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THE BURNINGHATEFIRE IN MY BRAIN...SOON, SOON THE BURNINGRAGEPAIN WILL FILL EVERYTHING...!
HE'S GONE COMPLETELY MAD...
AND HE'S GOING TO TAKE THE WHOLE WORLD WITH HIM IF WE DON'T STOP HIM...HE'S SWIPING THE EXPANDING LAVA INTO SUMMONING CIRCLES...THE MORE AREA HE CAN COVER, THE MORE DEMONS HE'LL BE ABLE TO BRING THROUGH TO OUR WORLD.
'WE' WON'T BE DOING ANYTHING. THIS IS MY CITY, AND YOU STILL HAVE YET TO GIVE ME A REASON TO TRUST YOU. I HAVE A STANDING ARMY HERE OF OVER

I think we can handle Dragon and his little band of creatures.
Don't be a fool! You need all the help you can get!
I'M AFRAID I STILL CAN'T AFFORD TO TRUST YOU. THE GUARDS WILL KEEP AN EYE ON YOU AND YOUR COMPANIONS WHILE I SEE TO OUR LITTLE PROBLEM. PERSONALLY.
ZERNA! WAIT!

DAMN...

DO YOU THINK THE EMPRESS CAN REALLY STOP HIM?

NOT IF ARAGON CAN SUMMON ENOUGH REINFORCEMENTS FROM THE ASTRAL PLANE... TIME IS OUR REAL ENEMY HERE

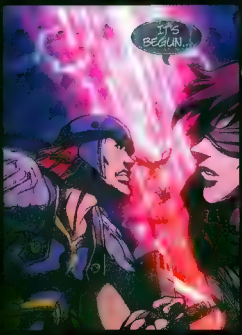
I ASSUME YOU DON'T PLAN ON SITTING IDLY BY?

No Tulhara, I don't.

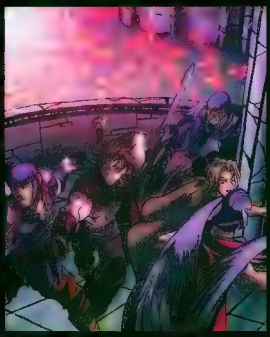
QUIET HUMAN. YOU GO NOWHERE UNLESS I SAY YOU DO...!

YES! COME AND FIGHT FOR YOUR LIVES! YOUR CHARRED BODIES WILL BE AS A BANQUET TO WELCOME MY BROTHERS!
WOOSH

LOOK OUT!!!

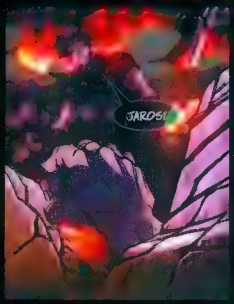

IT'S BEGUN...

NOW!!!



FWOOOM!
FWOOOM!
LOOK OUT!!!
WOOM!
WOOM!
WOOM!
WOOM!

IS EVERYONE ALL RIGHT?
...BARELY...


JAROS!

UHHH... IT SEEMS I OWE YOU MY LIFE, HUMAN... BUT WHY?

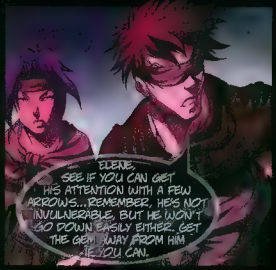
BECAUSE WE NEED YOUR HELP JAROS...YOU SAID YOU WERE IN THE MARKET FOR A NEW JOB. I'VE GOT ONE FOR YOU. STOP ARAGON. THE PAYMENT IS UP FRONT. YOUR LIFE.

HMPH. YOU SURPRISE ME HUMAN... VERY WELL. LET'S GET STARTED.

Meanwhile...

IF WE DON'T ACT QUICKLY, THE BANTRIS CITY WILL BE LEVELED. WHAT ARE YOUR ORDERS EMPRESS?
TAKE AS MANY MEN AS YOU NEED TO SECURE PASSAGE. I WANT YOU TO ASSEMBLE THE HOME GUARD, MY PERSONAL RETAINERS, AND EVERY SOLDIER YOU CAN FIND AND MEET ME IN THE WESTERN QUARTER OF THE CITY BEYOND THE WALL. AND DO NOT THROW AWAY YOUR LIVES ON THE UNDERLINGS OF ARAGON. I WANT EVERY COMMANDER TOLD SPECIFICALLY THAT OUR GOAL IS TO KILL ARAGON...

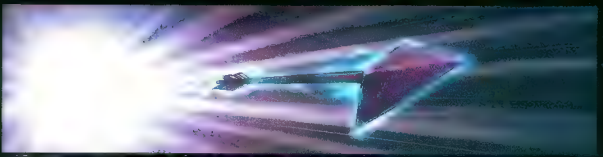
Meanwhile...
YES, GOD'S...WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO AGAINST THAT???


ELENE, SEE IF YOU CAN GET HIS ATTENTION WITH A FEW ARROWS... REMEMBER, HE'S NOT INVULNERABLE, BUT HE WON'T GO DOWN EASILY EITHER. GET THE GEM AWAY FROM HIM IF YOU CAN.

DO WE REALLY WANT HIS ATTENTION AT THIS POINT?

WE DON'T HAVE TIME TO COME UP WITH ANY BRILLIANT IDEAS, WE HAVE TO STOP HIM BEFORE THINGS GET OUT OF HAND. JUST STICK TOGETHER... AND STAY OUT OF HIS RANGE -- HE CAN ONLY COME AT US STRAIGHT ON IF WE STAY WHERE WE ARE...

RIGHT... AS LONG AS THE DEMON COMES STRAIGHT AT US...



KKRRKK!!
THOOSH!
WE
VE HIS
ATTENTION...

FOOLS... I GROW STRONGER BY THE MINUTE.
GET READY.
REMEMBER... WE HAVE TO TAKE HIM BEFORE THE BARRIER BETWEEN OUR DIMENSIONS COLLAPSES...

IT'S A TRAP..
SLAASHH!

THERE'S TOO MANY OF THEM!!
SKLURCH!
THOOSH!

THIS IS OUR CHANCE!

IT SEEMS WE HAVE A MUTUAL GOAL AFTER ALL... I BELIEVE WE CAN SET ASIDE OUR DIFFERENCES FOR THE TIME BEING..
AGREED..
NOW THAT WE'RE ALL IN AGREEMENT, I DON'T SUPPOSE MASTER ZEPH WOULD CARE TO SHARE WITH US ANY INSIGHT INTO THE CORRECT METHOD FOR KILLING A NINE FOOT TALL HALF HUMAN, HALF DEMON?
I'VE GOT AN IDEA OR TWO...

FWOOOM!!
FWOOOM!

KRRR-VOOOM!

UHHH...

FEAR NOT ZEPH...
I'M NOT GOING TO KILL YOU... SENDING YOU INTO THE AFTERLIFE WOULD BE TOO EASY...
INSTEAD, YOU WILL BEAR WITNESS TO THE BIRTH OF MY NEW WORLD, WHERE I WILL BE THE OVERLORD, AND WHERE YOU AND YOUR MISGUIDED ALLIES WILL BURN FOR ALL OF ETERNITY...
MATEO GUERRERO & JUAN JIMENEZ
To Be Continued

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ACRE

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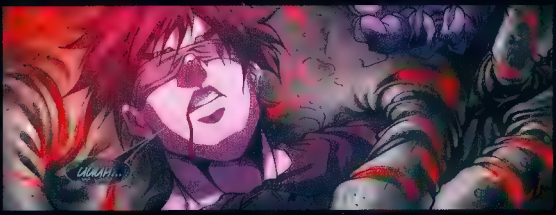

UGGGH...

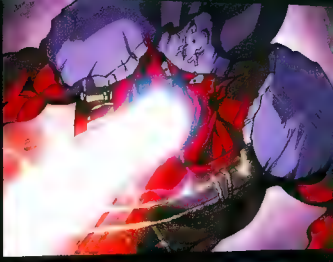
KR-
VWOOOSH!

ARAGON... WHAT HAVE YOU DONE...?

Ah... good. You're awake. I'm afraid Aragon can't hear you. His soul has been completely subjected by my own. There is only Astaroth now.
I've been amusing myself with the locals while you've been asleep. They're quite persistent, actually. Its too bad they're already dead. The barrier between your dimension and my own will soon crumble...
No force on either the astral or material plane can stop the flow of energy from spilling over and destroying your world.
No force on the material plane... that's it...

AH, YOUR WOULD-BE SAVIORS HAVE RETURNED AGAIN...
THIS IS AS MANY MEN AS I COULD, MUSTER HIGHNESS... ARAGON'S DEMONS ARE KEEPING THE BULK OF OUR FORCES SPLIT UP THROUGHOUT THE CITY...
IT WILL HAVE TO BE ENOUGH THEN... DETAIL SOME SOLDIERS TO FREE KEZEA AND THE OTHER HUMANS, AND THEN SIGNAL THE ATTACK. WE'RE GOING TO NEED ALL THE HELP WE CAN GET...
YES EMPRESS.

YOU MEN! GO AND FREE THE CAPTAIN AND THE OTHER HUMANS. THE REST OF YOU, FOLLOW ME...



FSSSHH!

SKKLUURGH!

THAT'S THE LAST RYOTIAN BLOOD YOUR CLAW WILL TASTE TODAY DEMON!
YOU SAY THAT AS IF IT MATTERS...

THOOM
SKURCH
HAHAHAHAHA!

TOO LARGE... IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF THE
YOUR LAST PLAN FAILED MISERABLY... ARE WE SUPPOSED TO THROW OUR LIVES AWAY ON YOUR NEWEST FANCY?
LOOK AROUND YOU IDIOTS. EVEN WITHOUT THE HUMAN'S PLAN, WE ONLY HAVE ONE OPTION.

...FIGHT, OR DIE.
THWAAASHH!
NOW'S OUR CHANCE! PRESS THE ATTACK!

SHAASH!
KKRRAAAKK!!!
SKLUURCH!
AND I'M TRYING TO MAKE SURE THEIR DEATHS
THUP!

ARAGON!!!
WHHHHH
FOOLISH HUMAN...DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU HAVE THE ABILITY TO MATCH ME IN A BATTLE OF PURE MAGICAL FORCES?
VERY WELL THEN...

KKRR-BOOM!!
TAKE COVER!
WHAT IS HE DOING?
I DON'T KNOW...

THWAAM!
UUZZZZ!!
YOUR POWERS ARE IMPRESSIVE HUMAN, BUT NO MATCH FOR MINE. ALREADY I CAN FEEL YOUR STRENGTH WEAKENING...
Just keep thinking that for a little while longer...
UNGG!
UNGG!

WOOOM!
IT'S OVER-DEPH...
SHRRIP!
YOU, AND YOUR WORLD, ARE DOOMED...

WHAT TRICKERY IS THIS?!?!
AH!!! YOU DIDN'T SEE FIT TO KEEP ANY PACT DE ARAGON'S MIND. IF YOU HAD, HE MIGHT HAVE WARNED YOU I LEARNED THE TRICK FROM HIM HEHEE HA...
YOUR PATHETIC REINFORCEMENTS ARE TOO LATE ZEPH.

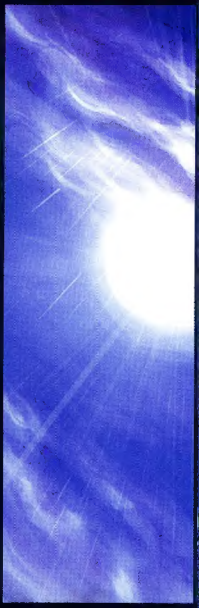
WRONG, ASTEROTH... THEY ARE THE ONLY REINFORCEMENTS I NEED.
...YOU WERE RIGHT ABOUT ONE THING THOUGH...
I COULDN'T POSSIBLY USE AS MUCH MAGICAL ENERGY AS YOU CAN...
THAT'S WHY I'M GOING TO TAKE YOU BACK!!

YOU LOSE HUMAN! BEHOLD!
THE PORTAL OPENS! YOUR WORLD ENDS!
I'M AFRAID NEITHER OF US WILL BE HERE TO SEE IT!
THHOOOSH!!

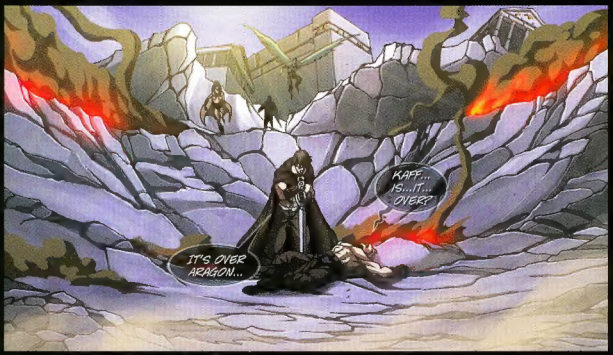
WHAT DO WE DO NOW???
KKRR-BOOOM!

WOOOM!

VWOOOSH!



FFSSSS!


IT'S OVER ARAGON...
KAFF... IS IT... OVER?

THE NAMELESS ONES SEALED THE GATE...

I TOLD YOU...WE'D SAVE THE WORLD ZEPH...YOU SHOULD LEARN...TO BE MORE... TRUSTING...

Three months later.
Elene, I hope this message reaches you well.
I'm glad you've finally found time to visit your mother. A lot has happened over the last while.
The disaster that we all feared would be the end of our world seems to have been averted...
It seems we owe our salvation to nothing less than the flames of hell itself. The portal to the astral plane opened for just an instant before the nameless ones were thrown into the gateway.
That brief touch of fire seems to have made some profound. Every rainfall since then has been warm, slowly melting away the cold.
The Ryotians can no longer maintain their stranglehold on the continent now that the other races can fend for themselves. A new power struggle begins now, as leaders of old reestablish themselves, and new ones attempt to make a name for themselves.

Our friend Tahjarra has gone back to her own people, to oust the remaining Ryotian forces from her own homelands. She sends her regards, and hopes her own fight will be done before the year is out and perhaps we can all be reunited in Adara.

As for me, I'm unsure what the future will hold. We enter a new era now, one that may not welcome an old man like me interfering in its affairs.
I've decided to return to my sanctuary, like I did all those years ago. But this time is different than the last. Though there appears to be yet another battle just over the horizon---

--This time, I dare to hope for a better world...
The End Of Ice Age
THANK YOU !!
MATEO & AURE